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THE LIFE AND MEMOIRS OF COUNT MOLÉ

COUNT MOLÉ AS *GRAND JUGE*.
From the portrait by David.

The Life and Memoirs of Count Molé (1781-1855)

Edited by the Marquis de Noailles

VOLUME I.
(1804 - 1815)

WITH EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS

LONDON: HUTCHINSON & CO.
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EDITOR'S NOTE

The charge has sometimes been made against writers of memoirs that they lack impartiality and pass judgments which are vitiated by their preferences or personal enmities. This may sometimes have been the case, but if so one can only regard it as the inevitable consequence of the fierce struggles in which they were engaged; those who have played an active part in such struggles are obviously bound to judge the times in which they live with less moderation—more severity, if you like—than succeeding generations. But when this allowance is made for human passions it must be admitted that to us memoirs are the most faithful and lifelike picture of the happenings and personalities of an age, a picture drawn by those in a position to see them, those who are anxious to let us know how they were judged.

A publication of memoirs must be complete and sincere, not only because of the sequence of events but also because it ought to be the posthumous fulfilment of the author's wishes.

But in the "Life and Memoirs of Count Molé," which we are now presenting to the public, we have thought it our duty to make certain excisions, and we have drawn attention to them to explain the resulting gaps, which necessarily injure the general run of the style. We have left untouched everything concerned with individuals who now belong to history, and whose public or private life has long been thoroughly investigated by numerous writers. In any case, we have done so without expressing opinions as to the soundness or otherwise of the opinions expressed.

From his youth Count Molé was in the habit of recording, with his impressions, events that took place before his eyes, or in which he was concerned. From these daily notes he made a start with his memoirs, but had not time to finish them.

His actual "Memoirs" extend from 1781–1801 and 1813–1819.

He also left two manuscripts, "Relations with the Emperor," and "The Hundred Days," the latter unfinished and no doubt intended to complete the portion of his memoirs dealing with the years 1813 and 1814.

It is from these different sources that I have taken the present work, the object of which is to preserve the memories and writings of my ancestor.

We have followed chronological order, using other documents in our possession, or information culled from various sources, to fill up the gaps in the "Memoirs," and allowing Count Molé himself to speak, wherever possible. Such is the plan of this book.

To the kindly assistance of M. Fréderic Masson, the learned academician, the helpful suggestions of M. le Sénateur Pauliat and the favours of M. Caplain I owe the fact that I have discovered part of what was missing in these documents.

These "Memoirs" have had a curious history. For reasons unknown to me Count Molé entrusted them, with a number of notes and letters, to a friend of the family from whose possession they vanished without leaving a trace. Dispersed, and passing from hand to hand (looted, one might almost say), these various writings have been used unscrupulously, and it was only thanks to the help I have mentioned that we have been able partially to reconstitute these family archives.

Of the "Diary" the greater part is missing; someone in whose possession it was apparently lost it.

That part of the "Memoirs" which deals with the period 1781–1804 and the years 1813 and 1814 is also missing. If it still exists, perhaps the publication of this volume will enable us to find it. We should receive it gratefully.

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CHAPTER I

The Molés.—Childhood of Mathieu Louis Molé.—He emigrates to England with his parents.—Return to France.—First and second arrests of his father.—His father's death on the scaffold.—Mathieu Louis is imprisoned with his mother and two sisters.—He regains his freedom at Thermidor.—Death of his sister and uncle.—The hardships of his childhood.—His taste for literature.

THE LIFE AND MEMOIRS OF COUNT MOLÉ

1781-1855

CHAPTER I

ON April 20, 1794, Édouard François Mathieu Molé, Count de Champlâtreux, Marquis de Méry, mounted the scaffold raised in the name of human liberty and fraternity and died at the age of thirty-four, leaving behind him a widow and three children of tender years, two girls and a boy.

Mathieu Louis Molé, the boy who mourned his father and to whose memory this book is dedicated, born on January 24, 1781, was the descendant of an illustrious parliamentary family hailing from Troyes, who had given France an uninterrupted succession of high magistrates since the fifteenth century.

The first to make this name illustrious was Guillaume Molé, *échevin* of the city of Troyes: he drove away the English and in 1429 opened the gates of the town to Charles VII, who went to Rheims with Jeanne d'Arc to be crowned King of France.

Later on Édouard Molé, *procureur-général* to the *Parlement* of Paris during the League, negotiated the abjuration of Henry IV, and when the States of the League wanted to place a son of Philip II on the throne he made the *Parlement* pass the celebrated decree of June 26, 1593, which forbade the transfer of the French crown to foreign

princesses and princes, and declared all procedure contrary to the Salic Law null and void.

But Mathieu, the son of this Molé, is the most famous in history. Councillor to the *Parlement* and then President of one of the Chambers of Requests he was appointed *procureur-général* in 1614 at the age of thirty. He was renowned for his great integrity and his independent character.

In 1631, at the time of the trial of the Marshal de Marillac after the Day of Dupes, he had the constitution of the extraordinary commission, set up to try the accused, declared illegal and brought the matter to the notice of the *Parlement*. The King had the declaration quashed and a decree of the Council suspended Mathieu Molé and ordered him to appear in person. He went to Fontainebleau where the court was in residence and, summoned before Louis XIII in Council, he firmly upheld the cause of the *Parlement* and was able to gain a respectful hearing. He was restored to his post and in 1641 appointed First President.

During the *Fronde*, in circumstances of extreme difficulty and frequently of great danger, he always showed himself a defender of the royal power, although he had to handle his associates carefully to retain some influence over them. After the arrest of Blancmesnil and Broussel the *Parlement*, under popular pressure, went in procession to the Louvre —on foot and in their scarlet robes with Mathieu Molé at their head—to ask the Queen to set them free. Barricades were erected : they opened to the magistrates on their way to the Louvre but it was otherwise when they came back without the prisoners.

" When the *Parlement* came out of the Palais-Royal and said nothing about Broussel's release," writes Cardinal de Retz in his Memoirs, " it at first found nothing but a

sullen silence, instead of the previous cheering: when it reached the first barricade at the Barrière des Sergents, there was a murmuring among the crowd which was only appeased by an assurance that the Queen had promised satisfaction. The menaces at the second barricade were diverted in the same fashion. The third, which was at the Croix du Taroir, refused to be paid in that coin. Some two hundred men rushed forward, levelling their pikes at the First President, and a butcher's boy cried out: 'Back you go, traitor! Bring us back Broussel and Mazarin, or the Chancellor as a hostage unless you want to be massacred yourself!'

"You can imagine the confusion and terror which fell upon all present: five Presidents and more than twenty councillors rushed helter-skelter into the crowd to try and escape. The First President alone, to my mind the bravest man of his century, stood firm and undaunted: he took his time to rally what he could of his company and in all his words and requests he maintained the dignity of the law. He walked slowly back to the Palais-Royal in a running fire of insults, threats, execrations and blasphemy. He was so bold by nature that he never spoke better than in this crisis. He surpassed himself on this occasion, and it is certain that he touched the hearts of all save the Queen."

Ultimately the *Parlement* promised to suspend its sittings and he came out behind the king's carriages, which were going to fetch the prisoners.

"If it were not blasphemy," writes Cardinal de Retz further on, "to say that our age can show a more intrepid figure than the great Gustavus and the Prince de Condé, I should say it was Mathieu Molé, the First President."

After the defeat of the Parliamentary troops, Mathieu Molé signed the Treaty of Rueil (1649) with the Court

which marked the end of the first *Fronde*. When he returned to the Palace to report the conclusion of the treaty it was only with great difficulty that he could clear a way through the crowds massed outside the building. At the sitting his words were greeted by angry shouts from the Leaguers, shouts which were taken up by the crowd outside, which threatened to break in the doors. Someone suggested to the First President that he should slip out by the muniment rooms and get home unobserved. "The Court never hides," was his answer. However, he decided to leave and went out on the arm of the Deputy: when he appeared, the shouts and threats doubled and a citizen put his musket to Molé's forehead and said he was going to kill him. Without moving the weapon or turning his head Molé coldly remarked: "When you've killed me I shall only want six feet of earth," and walked on without quickening his pace.

When the Court returned to Paris he was made Keeper of the Seals (1651), but he returned them a few days later in order not to be an obstacle to the reconciliation of the parties. He received them again on the day Louis XIV was proclaimed of age (1651) and he retained the office until his death in 1656. "Mathieu Molé put the welfare of the state before anything else," Cardinal de Retz writes in another place.

Jean Molé, known as Monsieur de Champlâtreux, son of Mathieu Molé, did himself honour by an act of generous courage when at the peril of his own life he saved that of Cardinal de Retz (whose political opponent he was, like his father) in a faction fight between partisans of the Deputy and those of the Prince de Condé. "There have been few nobler deeds and I shall carry tender memories of it to my grave," Goudi subsequently wrote.

Louis and Jean Baptiste Molé, son and grandson

respectively of Jean Molé, both became Presidents of the *Parlement* of Paris.

Mathieu François Molé, son of Jean Baptiste, First President of the *Parlement* of Paris since 1757, gave up public life when Maupeou's *Parlement* began, and lived in retirement until his death.

Lastly Édouard François Molé, his son and father of Mathieu Louis, was destined to seal this long list of great magistrates with his blood.

Mathieu Louis was also the descendant of an illustrious family of magistrates through his mother, Marie Louise de Lamoignon, daughter of the Marquis de Lamoignon, President and Keeper of the Seals.

* * *

Notwithstanding the symptoms of an agitation, the future developments of which no one then foresaw, at the time Mathieu Louis Molé came into the world everything seemed to point to a happy life for him. His early years passed tranquilly in Paris, Méry or Champlâtreux, the old ancestral place, between his mother, whose life was devoted exclusively to her children and charity, and his father, who gave his family and his wife's good works all the time which was not claimed by the duties of his post.

From his tenderest youth Mathieu Louis Molé was to know the tribulations of a life which was to be a vagrant's, and often threatened. He was barely eight when the storm of the Revolution burst and Fate set about heaping upon his young head the most terrible catastrophes, with their poignant alternatives of anguish and hope, illusion and mourning.

Towards the end of 1789 he had to follow his father, who emigrated with his family to England, no longer

finding any security in France either for himself or his children or belongings. For three years they led a retired and humble life there.

But now the Constituent Assembly declared emigration a crime, trebled the taxes of *émigrés*, and introduced a treble tax on rents and incomes. The Legislative Assembly in turn improved on these measures and decreed that every *émigré* who did not return to France within a fixed time would see his property confiscated and sold. President Molé, like all other *émigrés*, found himself in the following dilemma : Must he return to France, expose and perhaps surrender himself to massacre by the mob, or must he bring his wife and children down to squalor and poverty ? He chose the former alternative in the hope of saving his family and preserving at least some remnant of his wealth.

In the early months of 1792 Mathieu Louis Molé returned to France with his parents and sisters, and followed them to their town house in the Faubourg Saint-Germain, where they thought they were safer than at Méry or Champlâtreux. There they passed the same weary and difficult existence, an existence tortured by perpetual alarms, keeping out of sight, hardly venturing to go out of doors and without any guarantee for the morrow.

On his return from his emigration, President Molé had written to the King to assure him of his devotion and tell him he thought he could be more useful to his cause by returning to France than by remaining abroad. Then came August 10. This letter was found in the safe after the invasion of the Tuileries and it made him seem an enemy of the Revolution. He was arrested and incarcerated in the Abbaye prison.

The imprisonment order (preserved in the Château de Champlâtreux), with the official heading of the Paris

Municipality, Police Department, National Guard, runs as follows :—

Le Sieur Lavacquerie concierge of the Prison de l' Abbaye, will receive le Sieur Molé Champlâtreux and keep him until he is summoned before us.

To the *Comité de surveillance*, at the Mairie, this 19th August, 1792, year VI of Liberty, year I of Equality.

DUFFERT. FRANÇOIS. CALLY.

Police Administrators and Members of the *Comité de surveillance*.

Summoned to appear before the tribunal which was sitting in the very prison into which he had been thrown, President Molé was only saved by the devotion of his valet, Duval. He had to hide in the attic of the building and when he did not appear on his name being called out his faithful servant, who had mingled in the mob of "*Septembriseurs*"* and thus managed to get inside the prison, stood forth and addressing both the judges and the spectators, took up the defence of his master. Borrowing the jargon of the day, he described him as a benefactor of the people, reminding them of the services the President and Madame Molé had rendered to all and sundry.†

His improvised speech moved the audience and its emotion infected the judges: one of them called out: "Very well, go and look for him, and if you find him tell him that the people forgive him."

Duval went out, found him ultimately and brought him back to the people who greeted him with cheers, forced him on to a hurdle and conveyed home in triumph the very man they were thirsting to massacre only a few moments before.

During the morning Madame Molé, with her weeping children around her, was in torment unutterable. Hearing

* Name given to those who took part in the September massacres. [F.A.H.].

† "*Vie de Madame Molé*," by the Marquis de Ségur.

the noisy procession approach they thought their own turn had come and at first Madame Molé was under the impression that it was the corpse of her husband they were carrying; but at last the presence of Duval at the head of the throng and his cheery face reassured her. "Here's your husband we've brought back, *petite citoyenne*," someone in the crowd called out to Madame Molé, "but only on condition that you kiss us all round."

Old President Molé witnessed the triumphal return of his son from his window. He died shortly afterwards at the age of eighty-eight.

President Molé was saved, but his family circle was not destined to be complete once more for long. The fall of the Girondins made the Dantons, Robespierres and Marats all powerful and their "Law of Suspects" was to intensify the bloody reprisals of their predecessors.

M. Molé might have taken advantage of the respite his first release gave him to try and escape abroad and at any rate save his life. He made no attempt. No doubt he quailed before the difficulties of crossing the frontiers. Perhaps too, he refused to abandon his wife and children —for he would have had to escape alone—or to expose them to misery through the confiscation of his property which would inevitably have followed his departure. Perhaps he had lost hope, or he may have been tired of life. He stayed where he was.

After a few months of a retired and harassed existence such as he had led on his return from emigration, he was arrested again and brought with the leading magistrates before the Revolutionary Tribunal in the Salle Saint-Louis. The principal count of the indictment was the protest of the *Parlement* against the decree of the Constituent Assembly which abolished it. This protest had not been

published. The minute recording it was found in the house of Monsieur de Rosambo, and the envelope bore this inscription: "In case of death this document must be handed to M. de Saron or Messieurs de Champlâtreux, de Gourgues, d'Ormesson, Gilbert de Voisins." At the trial M. de Saron turned to M. de Rosambo and said: "I am intensely grateful, sir, for the trust with which you have honoured me." M. de Champlâtreux and the other presidents associated themselves with this reply.

The period preceding his appearance before the shameful parody of justice which History calls the Revolutionary Tribunal was marked by desperate efforts by Madame Molé to save her husband's head. Mathieu Louis Molé shared the labours and illusions of his mother, who liked to hope that as he had been saved once her husband could be saved again. Accompanied by her young son she tried again and again to move the members of the Revolutionary Tribunal or others in a position to entertain her request; she knocked at every door and nothing daunted her. She presented the Committee of Public Safety with a *memoire** justifying the record of her husband since the outbreak of the Revolution. The *memoire* is divided into two articles. The first contains a list of the charitable gifts distributed by President Molé in all the communes of his domains. In the second were set out all the measures for civil order decreed by the laws of the day which M. Molé had conscientiously observed. The *memoire* was sent back to Madame Molé with the following note:

> Revolutionary Committee of la Fontaine Grenelle, the 25th Ventose of Year II of the Republic.
>
> The Committee has received Citizen Molé's *Memoire* and read it carefully: the facts it sets forth are too well known to require documentary proof, so the Committee returns it to Citizen Molé.
>
> (Five Signatures.)

* Preserved in the Château de Champlâtreux.

The irony of the reply made it only too plain what the result of all these efforts would be.

The faithful Duval, whom we meet once again, did everything possible on his side and with the help of patience and money managed to see his master. He suggested escaping, but the President refused, no doubt foreseeing the futility of the attempt and not desiring to let someone else suffer death in his place. Duval even succeeded in seeing Fouquier-Tinville* and took upon himself to offer a million for the President's life. Unfortunately it was the very morning of the execution. "Why didn't you come an hour ago?" cried Fouquier-Tinville, "it's too late! The tumbril's gone."

It was true, and perhaps at the very moment these words were uttered President Molé died on the scaffold with eighty other magistrates of the *Parlement* of Paris and Toulouse. [April 20, 1794.]

Under the Revolution it was thus that France paid her debt of gratitude to her most disinterested servants, and honoured the memory of those who had worked during several generations for her greatness and glory.

* * *

The Abbé de Sambucy came to tell Madame Molé of the death of her husband. On the previous evening he had been able to see him and he had come secretly by night to convey his farewell messages to his wife. Although she was expecting this fatal news, its confirmation was a terrible blow to her. She was smitten with paralysis in all her limbs and it lasted several months and threatened to bring her to the grave.

This period was merciless to those whose past was a bond with the destroyed regime, and it was no less cruel

* "*Vie de Madame Molé*," by the Marquis de Ségur.

to those whose tender age should have kept them out of these miseries and struggles. At the age of thirteen Mathieu Louis Molé found himself deprived of his natural protector and guide, and alone with a mother who was all but dying and two sisters younger than himself. The house in the Faubourg Saint-Germain still gave them a roof, but they lived in utter penury. Their father's property had been sequestrated and administered in their name—as they were minors—by the nation. In other words they were left nothing to live upon.

They led a wretched existence, without food some days, and obliged, as a family tradition tells us, to go and ask —or even beg—for food at the door of a restaurant at the corner of the Rue de Tournon or at the gates of barracks. This melancholy life lasted several weeks, but as if Fate took a delight in heaping all its sorrows on their heads a new trial was yet to be inflicted upon them. An ailing woman and three children were obviously a peril to the nation and its institutions, their freedom a heresy to the religion of the day. All four were arrested and taken to the Conciergerie. Mathieu Louis, accompanied by his two young sisters walked behind their mother who was carried on a mattress by four town guards ; this miserable procession passed through all the quarters which a few years before President Molé had visited almost daily for charitable purposes and to relieve misery.

Mathieu Louis knew all the privations and sufferings of imprisonment. But to his extreme youth he owed the fact that he was not separated from his mother and sisters. Continuous espionage, unexpected inspections in the cells, the daily roll-call of prisoners who were to appear before the Revolutionary Tribunal or condemned prisoners leaving for the scaffold, and the daily apprehension of hearing his mother's or even his own name—such was his life

during this long incarceration. His melancholy existence had however been left one compensation. A young man had followed him, having obtained permission to share his captivity: it was M. Martin de Puisieux, his tutor, a faithful and devoted friend who had refused to leave him.*

On the 9th *Thermidor* the fall of Robespierre was to render their captivity rather less burdensome but it did not open the doors of their prison. They spent part of the winter of 1794-95 there. To the privations they had hitherto endured were added the sufferings due to the cold of that winter, which was exceptionally severe. At length they left their prison, no doubt glad enough to have saved their lives, but crushed by the miseries of the immediate past and anxious about the future.

* * *

Free once more, Mathieu Louis Molé followed his mother and sisters to Méry. It was not of her own choice that his mother made Méry her refuge. The prisoners of the Terror who escaped death and left their prisons were compelled to reside only in the locality assigned to them. It was no doubt of set purpose that they were not permitted to return to Champlâtreux, the ancestral home of the Molés, of which Mathieu Louis had become owner by the death of his grandfather and father. Although the decrees of Thermidor had restored that estate to him the Château of Champlâtreux was still occupied by a hospital which the Convention had established there.

Méry was assigned as a residence for Madame Molé and her children and they were forbidden to leave it without permission.

* Madame Molé and her children remembered him gratefully, and subsequently helped him to start in life. "He made an excellent marriage and was Prefect of Angers under the Restoration. His wife and children withdrew to Rome after the revolution of 1830."—("*Vie de Madame Molé*," by the Marquis de Ségur.)

The Château of Méry had been more or less spared. Most of the family pictures and furniture were still there. The tombs alone had been rifled, so true is it that in all times of revolution hatred avenges itself as much on the dead as on the living, and that the very graves which all religions and civilizations honour and respect get no mercy from the mob.

During the first few months of their newly-won freedom their life at Méry was very harassed. Fortunately for them, Madame Molé was able to recover part of her jewellery, including three diamonds of such value that replicas in glass had been sent before the Revolution to the leading jewellers in France and abroad to facilitate their recovery in case of theft. A friend had hidden them when Madame Molé was arrested and they were loyally restored to her when she came out of prison.* The sale of these jewels enabled them to live.

Their life was comparatively happy and peaceful. But fresh mourning was yet to be their lot. The youngest girl, Louise, only three years old at the time of their imprisonment, did not long survive her sufferings in captivity and died shortly after her return to Méry.

Another bereavement which affected Mathieu Louis Molé less directly, but was no less tragic in its circumstances, was soon afterwards added to the long list of their sorrows.

Madame Molé's brothers, Count Christian and Count Charles de Lamoignon, took part in the Quiberon expedition.

The regiment of Charles de Lamoignon was told off to protect the embarkation of the Royalist troops which escaped from Fort Penthièvre. His brother was wounded in the leg and could not walk. Charles de Lamoignon carried him on his shoulders to a boat but himself remained

* "*Vie de Madame Molé*," by the Marquis de Ségur.

on shore, though he could have gone on board too, as he did not wish to leave "while his regiment was still fighting."

The Count de Sombreuil, who was in command of what remained of the expedition, went to General Hoche and offered his life in exchange for those of his companions. His offer was accepted. As no writing material was available the capitulation was arranged verbally: the lives of all the *émigrés* who could join the ships were to be spared. Sombreuil alone remained behind as a prisoner.

The ships which were to take the *émigrés* away were late and the latter were sent to Auray where they were all shot a few days later, notwithstanding the promise given. Charles de Lamoignon was among them.

* * *

Blood, mourning and tears—these marked the entry of Mathieu Louis Molé into the world. As he was later to write of himself in a note preserved in the Château of Champlâtreux: "Since his earliest youth he exhausted the lessons of tribulation."

These sorrows and trials which marked his infancy inevitably left a profound impression on his mind. As the writings he has left seem to indicate, he had few illusions left on the subject of mankind; he had witnessed so many crimes, so many infamies, lies and injustices that to these he seems to have owed his early disillusionment, a certain vein of melancholy he preserved throughout life, and no little contempt for his contemporaries. A love of truth, carried sometimes to the point of setting it above tolerance, was one of his principal characteristics. He passed through life keeping everything under observation, and his judgments on the men of his day are no doubt sincere but sometimes harsh.

Left to his own resources so far as education was concerned, and without teachers, he himself made good the gaps in his intellectual training which were the result of his captivity and the years spent in his efforts with the revolutionaries to save his father's life. Thanks to intense labour he succeeded. Endowed with brilliant intellectual qualities, prone to reverie from his earliest youth and dependent upon his own resources, he had both the taste and the will to work unaided. At sixteen he passed his days and part of his nights in self-education, and "succeeded by his own efforts, so to speak, in making good the wrong circumstances had done him in depriving him of all instruction."

He paid particular attention to Greek and Roman literature. Like the whole of his generation—children of the eighteenth century who were still under its influence—he had a strong leaning towards philosophic and social studies. He worked on Montesquieu as well as Rousseau, Voltaire as much as Descartes. He formed purely personal opinions on the great social and moral movements of his time and the different periods of history.

When the internal situation cleared up and he was allowed to leave Méry, he successfully attended the lessons of the School of Public Works (subsequently the École Polytechnique), but to himself alone he owed that highly original education in which he acquired the habit (which was to prove so useful to him later on in the handling of men and affairs) of ascertaining and judging everything for himself.

CHAPTER II

The marriage of Mathieu Louis Molé.—Madame Beaumont's *salon*.—The friendships M. Molé made there.—He publishes his "Moral and Political Essays."—Analysis of the "Essays."—The work praised by Joubert, Fontanes and Chateaubriand.

CHAPTER II

HE married early. As revolutionary legislation had begun to bear less hardly, Madame Molé obtained the repeal of the decree of sequestration of her own and her children's property. She arranged the distribution of their father's property among them. Champlâtreux, the family seat, was allotted to Mathieu Louis Molé and Méry to his sister Marie Louise Félicité.

Madame Molé urged her son to marry and arranged his betrothal to Mlle. Alexis Charlotte Joséphine de la Live de la Briche, the only daughter of Madame de la Briche. Her father had died shortly after her birth. The marriage took place on August 17, 1798. Those were still the days of very early marriages. The parties were both only seventeen.

"I married my daughter to-day," writes Madame de la Briche in her "*Memoires*,"* "to Monsieur Molé, the sole scion of a family illustrious in our history for its virtues and its services to France. His father was a victim of our terrible Revolution and the grandson of Édouard and Mathieu Molé perished on the scaffold. May my adopted son enjoy all the happiness that was denied his father; may my daughter bring him that bliss, and be happy in that pure and legitimate love which fills the heart without troubling it; may their children perpetuate so honourable a name and honour it still more by their virtues."

These desires of my ancestress were only partly fulfilled. Two daughters were the sole fruit of the union, the first after twelve and the second after fourteen years of marriage, and the hope of seeing a son continue an illustrious name was disappointed.

* "*Memoires inédites de Madame de la Briche.*"

During her captivity Madame Molé, to save her life and those of her children, had taken a vow to consecrate herself to the religious life when the latter no longer needed her. In her haste to leave the world no doubt she did not go very far to find a son-in-law, and in the course of the year 1804 she married her daughter—who was barely eighteen—to her own brother, Christian de Lamoignon, twenty-eight years of age and the last of his name. The uncle married the niece and the couple came to live at Méry.

Her two children married, Madame Molé retired to Vannes, where she founded the Institut des Sœurs de la Charité de Saint-Louis, of which she was superior when she died at an advanced age.

By the irony of fate, or a remarkable coincidence, these two families, which had twice been united to perpetuate their names, became extinct at the same time. Mathieu Louis Molé had two daughters only. Christian de Lamoignon's only child was a girl, who married Adolphe Louis de Ségur and had no children. Thus ended these two families, the Molés in the direct male line and the Lamoignons altogether.

* * *

When the Terror was over tranquillity gradually returned. What was left of former society, once so brilliant, gathered together as best it might and a few *salons* were reopened, small and modest though they were. A few new-comers, leaders of the day, there met the survivors of the *ancien régime*, and this new society tried to revive the ancient traditions of wit and good manners.

One of the first *salons* to open was that of Madame de Beaumont, the daughter of M. de Montmorin, formerly Minister for Foreign Affairs under Louis XVI. She was a

woman of high intelligence and rare distinction. At first the gatherings at her house were restricted and intimate; men and women came to converse, to renew old acquaintances and congratulate each other on being still alive. The number of participants gradually increased and there was formed a brilliant array of talent and intellect. "A tranquil company," wrote M. Joubert, "in which the rivalries that keep men apart had no place, good-fellowship and fame went hand in hand, and without realizing it its members made it always their business to praise what is praiseworthy and thought only of what is beautiful; a tranquil company, and those who are left of it will never meet save to talk about her who was its star and centre, her who had brought them together."*

At her house met Pasquier, de Vintimille, Julien, Chênedollé, Guénsau de Mussy, de Fontanes and Joubert; Mesdames de Krudner, de Vintimille, de Duras, de Lévis.† There could be seen a young man "with a Roman face and the seriousness of a consul," writes J. Joubert. That young man was M. Molé. In his talk as in his gestures there was a dignity which could hardly be expected of his age and often seemed to verge on melancholy. The sorrows that had marked his early years had spread over his features that veil of gravity and sadness which they were always to retain, and which can be seen in all the portraits of him which have survived.

He had a natural leaning towards reflection and study, and as a product of that generation of the eighteenth century which had philosophic and contemplative tendencies, he developed a particularly close friendship with Chateaubriand, Fontanes and Joubert.

Jean Jacques Rousseau had started the fashion—with-

* "*Correspondance de J. Joubert,*" by M. Paul de Raynat. Preface.

† "*Correspondance de J. Joubert.*"

out as a matter of fact coming to any conclusion—of the study of the social and philosophical problems which humanity has been shouldering for so many centuries. This fashion had survived the Revolution—which it had to a great extent promoted—and now, immediately after the storm, the man who had suffered from it and he who had profited by it vied with one another in writing his social contract, from Siéyès, who spent his time in inventing constitutions, to M. Molé, who was not twenty-five years of age.

M. Molé was thus led to write his "Essays on Morals and Politics," a difficult subject that went well with his "austere youth." He had imagined a philosophic and social system which he describes in his essays.

To him human society, or rather the constitutions which have to keep it within reasonable limits, must, if they are to be just and permanent, reflect in some way the nature of man. To establish a government upon this basis it is necessary to begin by studying and knowing that nature, and then to apply to it a form of government adapted to it. Knowledge of man must lead to knowledge of the institutions suitable for him.

The author is amazed that this method has not been followed in works of the same kind. "Hitherto," he says, "those who have written about the various forms of government have done so as mechanics rather than philosophers... Many, carried alway by their genius, wanted the edifice to be borne by the clouds in some magic fashion."

The "Essays" are divided into two distinct sections, the first (entirely philosophical) called "Man," and the second (a logical conclusion from the first, and discussing the institutions most suited to our character) "Society."

In the first section M. Molé studies man, the being who knows himself, knows other beings and makes them

EXECUTION OF THE GIRONDINS.

subject to his will. Man's nature has two sides, one material and the other intellectual, and combines two faculties, the faculty of knowledge, which is limited by the imperfection of our organs, and the faculty of will, which is limited by our tastes and desires. Capable of moderation and violence alike, man realizes that moderation alone can save him, and his instinct and the necessity of preserving the species draw him inevitably to the beautiful and the good, the principal manifestation of which is Order. "Order is the will of divine expression and it is through order that the worlds are kept in being."

The faculties of which our mind is composed, the causes of its errors, the strength of our will, the domination of our passions, the love of the beautiful and the good—such are the subjects of this first section.

We can sometimes trace in it the influence of the philosophical notions of the eighteenth century, as where the author admits that ideas come from the senses. There he touches the school of Condillac. In the chapter called "The Relations between Man's two natures," he writes:

"His soul and his body are so essentially one that they are so to speak compelled to take their pleasures together and to modify their character so as to share in them equally. In the pleasures of the body those of the soul are found, in the pleasures of the soul those of the body. . . . In the objects of its desires the body demands something of that beauty and goodness which is the object of the soul's eternal delight. It wants the soul to be proud of its joys and to approve them even as it shares in them. The soul —and this is its grievous misfortune—can only take what it loves under forms, and by means furnished by the body.

"Through the body the soul discovers a multitude of

joys which it would never know : it preserves for the body the memory of those it has tasted and in times of dearth it feeds it with the image of the objects it has loved. . . ."

In this first section we also find the sentiment of the power of man. What we call our taste for change is nought but a conscious or unconscious searching after progress. " It is progress that we love and finality that we hate : we tire only when we cease to advance."*

By " progress " the author means the systematic development of our faculties.

Discussing the causes of our mental aberrations, M. Molé says that sin does greater mischief than our passions. " The passions are unquestionably slandered," he writes : " they are but the causes of the evils of which sin is the first. The passions become spent but sin is eternal and never tires. Passions sweep along those they torment, blind them and often ruin them. Sin leads them methodically, gives them cautious counsel ; it does not take away knowledge and it shows the way to avoid danger ; it is austere, even inexorable, and when it reveals an evil its victim does that evil with the compunction of duty ; it glorifies wrongdoing, it is in league with pride, and pride rewards all the wrongs it makes its victims commit. . . ."†

In another place he writes : " Pride is master only when the heart is silent."‡

With this allowance for the influence of the ideas of the dying century, the author is rather of the spiritualist school, the school of Plato and Descartes, and proceeds to some fine pages on God and Religion. But his greatest veneration is reserved for Pascal and he devotes a special chapter to him.

" No one can understand him," he writes, " without a

* Chapter X, Part I. † Chapter VI, Part I. ‡ Chapter XIV, Part I.

slight glow of pride. . . . It looks as if God sent him on earth to show the thought of man in all its glory and so that man should always glory in his thought.

" Pascal died very young and was ailing all his life : his body was weak ; it could not support his soul and he succumbed. Perhaps the result of this disparity between his physical and moral strength is a certain exaggeration in his principles and writings. *There* is a fine lesson for pride. As a rule exaggeration is the product of weakness : with him it sprang from his amazing strength. He grew weak under the weight of his thought : his eyes saw Truth at such close quarters that he was blinded, and thus we find the real man."

Yet Pascal's work seemed to him as dangerous as it was wonderful. His moral code inevitably " draws the strong heads which draw the others," but, says M. Molé, " without losing his character man cannot remain long on such dizzy heights, and in that state, if he falls, who can say where the fall will end ? "

Apart from these few influences M. Molé is his own self in everything he writes. He has drawn his philosophy from his own thoughts and his own process of reasoning, in full view of a society out of gear. He comes of a disillusioned age. " Humanity seems tired," he says, " the new generations, their eyes opened by the experiences of their predecessors, coldly contemplate their career. I myself, who am bound to be accused here of presumption, am of these generations out of time, and I have not escaped the common misfortunes. But at any rate I bewail my lot and dare not mention it without trembling."

The second part of the " Essays," " Society," begins with a hypothesis in which we can trace the influence of Jean Jacques Rousseau. Primitive society having become too large there was an assembly and men " agreed." " Such

was the origin of the first human laws, and their primitive simplicity was in keeping with the nature of man. From them the author derives the principles of human society and government.

While he was mentally preparing the political section of his "Essays," M. Molé was anxious to visit England, as at that time it was the fashion to regard the English constitution as the model to which our institutions should be shaped. He went there in April 1801 and stayed six months. To all who desired neither revolutionary levelling-down nor the incipient despotism England presented the spectacle of a country safely and solidly organized, thanks to a social hierarchy well defined within the framework of liberal institutions. M. Molé wished to study it on the spot.

Two chapters* of the "Essays" are devoted to a government which is not natural in a society naturally constituted. That society and government are English society and the English government, which the author considers artificial and dangerous. M. Molé admires in that society the power of tradition and the dignity of private manners, but in the government—in which the executive is entirely in the hands of Parliament and the sovereign has retained no rights and no initiative—he sees principles working for the dissolution of that political organization of which the aristocracy was the foundation. He attributes what is good among the English to the manners of the period preceding the Revolution of 1685, and he assigns what is lacking to the Constitution which followed it. Speaking of England in the "Esprit des Lois," Montesquieu draws attention to the same defects as M. Molé, but while the former considers them the necessary consequence and in no way really harmful, the latter regards them as a danger.

The last chapter of the "Essays" contains reflections

* Chapter VIII, Part II.

on the genius of the nations and the true object of society, which is happiness, a happiness which cannot be attained more surely than by order and tranquillity.

Order being the instinctive aspiration of man and the object of society, M. Molé concludes from this that the natural government is monarchy.* He was often accused of having begun his career by a defence of despotism. This calumny, invented for the necessities of political polemics, is given the lie to by M. Molé's own words. He shows on the contrary that monarchy is the soundest rampart against despotism. "Despotism establishes itself by cutting out all the intermediaries: the throne dominates everything. The commands which fall from on high, like a body the descent of which nothing can check, strike down those they affect and break, instead of bending, those who must obey. The despot acts directly on all classes and every individual; he strikes the poor man unknown to the rich, and the rich, powerless and defenceless remain exposed to his blows. The despot trembles at the sight of a hierarchy: he recognizes only favourites and slaves. Otherwise he spares only the prosperities of which he has no knowledge."

Those intermediaries are institutions and a strong hierarchy—the guarantees of power and liberty. Consciously or otherwise, M. Molé adheres to the principles of the old French monarchy and continues the traditions of those great parliamentarians, his ancestors.

A monarchy tempered by intermediaries from among the higher classes of the people, the authority of the sovereign rendering aristocratic despotism as impossible as mob rule, the unity of order and liberty—such is the policy of the "Essays." This political line, traced in a youthful work, was that which M. Molé consistently

* Chapters VIII and IX, Part II.

followed throughout his long political career and to which he remained ever faithful in the midst of the revolutions and changes of system which he witnessed. A moderate by nature, he endeavoured in the practical business of life to apply his ideas of order and conciliation, and when subsequently he became head of the government he preferred to face unpopularity rather than renounce principles he had held all his life.

As a disciple of Bossuet, who had said that the world had begun with monarchies and retained them as the most natural state, he is in disagreement with Montesquieu when he takes up the subject of liberty.

"Two books of the '*Esprit des Lois*,'" he writes, "are concerned with a discussion of liberty; the first is entitled: 'Of the laws which form political liberty in its relations with the citizen.'

"I have never understood that division. What then is the relation between political liberty and the constitution? A constitution can give liberty, but how can it experience liberty? I thought that it was only the citizen whom it is our business to make free, and that man alone can fall into servitude or taste freedom.

"Montesquieu carries this idea to great lengths. In another place he says: 'It may happen that a constitution is free when the citizen is not. The citizen might be free when the constitution is not free.' May I venture to say of so great a genius that he shared some of the prejudices of his times and has paid a kind of tribute to the century whose glory he has been?"

Before publishing his "Essays" M. Molé gave the proof sheets of it to M. Joubert. The latter took the manuscript away to the country, read it twice and made some notes.* "You are twenty-five years old!" he

* This copy is preserved at the Château de Champlâtreux.

wrote on the margin of the following passage: "I have never left my subject and never ceased to make observations bearing on it."

The worthy Joubert was alarmed at the somewhat dogmatic manner in which he expressed his conclusions. "Young man! How certain you are on very debatable points. A few more doubts for those who doubt," he writes in the margin at one point. And again: "Be careful at your age; I give you another sixty good years at least." Every page has its note, sometimes of criticism but generally of praise.

Joubert corresponded with him and sent his notes as his reading proceeded.* One day he wrote to him:†

"I have often thought that if I had happened to find your manuscript on the road when I was out walking I should have picked it up, and, after glancing at it, simply remarked: 'Hello! this is probably some of our metaphysical commonplaces.'

"I should have read the first lines with that doubt in my mind. Hum! I should have said at the second page: 'There's some good in this after all.' Then, when I got home with the manuscript in my pocket I should have been somewhat impatient for the hour when I could allow my eyes and mind a close inspection. As that hour approached, and after twenty glances at my watch, I should have gone to my room, read the whole thing through, and said to myself: 'Who on earth did this? I should dearly like to know! There's some excellent stuff in it.'

"I should probably have enquired of the posting-house, inns and passing travellers, and, discovering

* Letters of M. Joubert to M. Molé, preserved in the Château of Champlâtreux.

† September 10, 1803.

nothing, I should have ventured to write to the unknown author through the papers to inform him of my find and beg him to let me know what he was adding to this beginning if he wanted to reward me for the advice I was giving him, and to give a good deal of pleasure to a mind which was very delighted with the good use he had made of his.

"Without thinking and without knowing you have platonized. . . . It has proved to my great satisfaction what I have often said, that quite naturally, and without liking Plato or knowing him, men who excel in high matters always resemble Plato. The very force of the subject compels this, for Plato is metaphysics as Homer is poetry. . . ."

When the book appeared it had a sympathetic reception from the circle in which M. Molé moved and made quite a sensation among the public. M. de Fontanes and M. de Chateaubriand told the public that in this young writer they had a great hope, and they did much to make his work known.

Chateaubriand gave him an article in the "*Mercure de France*,"* and in spite of minor criticisms of certain points of philosophy or history, praised the work highly.

"A natural and sustained sobriety," he writes, "a firm and modest tone, dignified without being turgid, noble and sometimes profound views, and not least that moderation in opinion, that decency of good company—all the more precious because they are becoming rarer every day—such are the qualities which we think recommend this work to the public. . . .

"With a modesty which is quite uncommon, the author of the 'Essays' has not put his name to his work, but we

* December, 1805.

are promised that he is the last descendant of one of those noble families of magistrates which were for so long the glory of France. If that were so, we should be less astonished at the love of the beautiful and of Order which the 'Essays' breathe; we should no longer regard it as a merit in the author to possess hereditary advantages: we should praise his gifts alone."

Fontanes in turn praised the book in an article in the "*Journal des Débats*"* which was then called the "*Journal de l'Empire*." He compares Vauvenargues with M. Molé: "Both," he says, "from the age of pleasure devoted themselves to most important studies, and the latter, who is also the younger, appears to be somewhat sterner in his style as in his ideas. . . .

"One who devotes his earliest efforts to the maintenance of the principles of truth, and defends them with so much courage and talent, cannot be praised too highly. In reading his work we think we feel that he has brought his conduct and his principles into perfect harmony. The authority of his character fortifies that of his opinions. In cases such as these envy and hatred themselves are compelled to bestow upon the writer that respectful recognition they try to withhold up to the last moment from his work."

In spite of such brilliant patronage and the real success of the book a discordant note broke in upon the concert of praise. Representing, no doubt, the envy or hatred of which Fontanes spoke, M. Suard, a philosopher of the Voltaire school, and "one of those old men" (as M. Molé writes) "among whom my marriage had placed me," published in his paper, "*Le Publiciste*," some articles which were very disparaging to the "Essays." Their author was Mlle. Pauline de Meulan, who subsequently

* January 8, 1806.

married M. Guizot, Molé's implacable adversary under the July monarchy and his mortal foe.

* * *

If we have spoken of the "Moral and Political Essays" it is not only because even after a century has lapsed his youthful work still preserves the flavour of the purely personal thoughts and sentiments of their author, nor because of the place it won him in the literary world of his day. It is also because through the book Napoleon came to know and value him, so that it was the starting point of his political fortunes.

The "Essays" appeared at the end of 1805. "It was unusual, and perhaps presumptuous for one so young," writes M. Molé,* "to venture to bring himself to the notice of the public by treating of such high matters and in so convinced and somewhat vehement a tone. The work is that of a bold, independent young recluse and his dogmatic but sober accent betrays far more of conviction than pride."

Fontanes' article reviewing the "Essays" in the "*Journal des Débats*," was seen by the Emperor. The latter desired to know the book, which was sent to him at his headquarters, and on his return from Tilsit he gave M. Molé a favourable reception on the first occasion the latter approached him.

When M. Molé was appointed auditor to the Council of State that was quite enough to convince the public that they saw in the book—a book favourable to absolute power—a piece of flattery and a method of attracting the favour of Bonaparte. The young author had written his book with the utmost sincerity and with no ulterior design. "With a natural leaning towards reflection on

* Note preserved in the Château de Champlâtreux.

the matters which form the subject of this work," he writes,* " I was led to write it by my intellectual tastes and my continuous leisure. What I am publishing is merely a number of reflections, and I hope that the public will recognize in them a pure love of truth. I would rather obliterate them beyond trace than learn that they contain one opinion likely to mislead."

" *Generose puer*," writes Joubert in the margin. " Yet it is enough," he writes elsewhere,† " to consider the nature, we can even say the order, of his thoughts to recognize a pure, suffering and lofty spirit which has drawn all its inspiration from the spectacle of events and the memory of the misfortunes which had dogged his early youth."

* " Moral and Political Essays." Chapter XIV, Part I.

† Note preserved in the Château de Champlâtreux.

CHAPTER III

M. Molé abandons a literary career for public life.—Reasons for the change. —Conversation with Chateaubriand.—The Emperor appoints M. Molé auditor to the *Conseil d'État*.—First audience with the Emperor.—M. Molé's conversation with Napoleon.—Napoleon's views on Montesquieu, Pitt and England.—Portrait of Napoleon.—Sittings of the *Conseil d'État*.—Debate on the restoration of indirect taxation.—Treilhard.—Berlier.—Merlin of Douai.— Public education.—Further debate on liquor.—Napoleon's remarks about Louis XVI.—M. Molé's reflections.—Dubois (Prefect of Police) and Frochot (Prefect of the Seine).—Debate on the fish duties.—Fourcroy's report on public education read.—Napoleon's speech on this subject.—His ideas about the magistracy.

CHAPTER III

IN 1801 Bonaparte had offered M. Molé, through Lebrun, a post as auditor to the *Conseil d'État.* M. Molé declined, asking Lebrun to reply to the First Consul that he would ask for the post later on, as he was still too young (he was then twenty) and considered that he still needed time " to work to complete the general knowledge which is indispensable for any career."

During his six months' residence in England his liking for historical and literary studies and his passion for independence had only become more intense.

" More and more," he writes, " I came to like being accountable to no one for the employment of my time, and letting my spirit seek its natural paths of its own impulse, without check or guidance from any source other than its preferences."

When he returned to Paris he once more found himself among his friends, Chateaubriand, Fontanes and Joubert, and in that little *salon* of Madame de Beaumont which he was in the habit of frequenting before he went to England.

At that time Chateaubriand was working on his " *Martyrs.*" He outlined the scheme of the work and read him several chapters. Tradition required that M. Molé should give him advice and make him adopt certain changes.

It was the autumn of 1805. Chateaubriand took it into his head to visit the places " he had described before seeing them," writes M. Molé, and suggested that the latter should accompany him. M. Molé was at a turning-point in his life. The moment had come in which he must

choose between the studious, contemplative and untrammelled existence he had hitherto led and practical public life, in which he could render some service.

He was a descendant of those *parlementaires* who had always been the champions of political liberties and distinguished themselves by their resistance to royal power, men who rightly or wrongly believed that they were the necessary counterpoise to absolute power on the one side and demagogic aspirations on the other, and in a word considered themselves the sole representatives of the law. And as a descendant of those illustrious magistrates M. Molé, though detesting the excesses of the Revolution, was bound, unconsciously or otherwise, to be more lenient than others in his judgments on the upheavals after which men might hope for the restoration of a legal order of things. Under the influence of his great family memories, he felt that he had a duty towards his country and decided to address himself to public affairs. Without in any way denying the greatness of the past he took service under the new regime.

He reflected also that meditation was not enough to fill an existence and that his must be a more active life.

"He had found," he writes in speaking of himself,* "that mental speculation and contemplation are the consolation and refuge of youth in the grip of misfortune." He was not slow to realize that there are preoccupations more useful, and therefore more noble, and that these studies, for all their wealth of charms, are more fitted to decorate than to fill a life.

"Besides, when the same power which has restored men and things to their proper place has returned human minds to their true direction, those who loved their country

* Preface to the "*Essais de morale et de politique.*"

could no longer feel anything but the necessity of devoting themselves to it."

"My mind told me," he writes elsewhere,* "that it was time that the duties and responsibilities of public life should come to support me and protect me against the fluctuations and perplexities of my age."

He told Chateaubriand of this new frame of mind and the latter suggested a long walk in the Tuileries on which they could enlarge freely on all that was burdening their hearts. At the day and hour fixed they met as they were simultaneously entering the garden by what was then known as the gate of the Pont Tournant. "This joint punctuality is a good sign," Chateaubriand said, shaking hands. "I hope we shall find we agree when we've exhausted the subject."

Strolling under the pine trees, M. Molé explained that he was very much tempted to accompany him on his projected tour, but that family ties and his business affairs, which were still in some confusion, forced him to contemplate the necessity of abandoning the idea.

"I admitted to him," he writes, "with a frankness of which he was unworthy, that I felt a need to give my somewhat fitful soul duties which would give it support and protection. 'That's all right,' he interrupted, with ill-concealed annoyance. 'You have ambition and everything necessary to play a great part, such as a name and personal qualifications. You wanted me to see what was in your mind: I have done so.' The rest of the conversation was embarrassed. I had long lost all my illusions about Chateaubriand and seen the man as he was to reveal himself in his memoirs. We separated with a great show of outward friendship but feeling inwardly that the days

* A manuscript of Count Molé, entitled: "Relations with the Emperor," preserved in the Château of Champlâtreux. All the following quotations, up to and including the affair of the Jews, are taken from this manuscript.

of unrestrained companionship were over. I cannot use that word companionship without explaining it. I could give no other name to the intimate and familiar relationship with Chateaubriand. When his dignity was not involved he became so unaffected, gay and natural that for a moment one forgot who he was, whence he came and what he had done. One abandoned one's self to a charm which could not exactly be relied upon but could be enjoyed without thought for the morrow."

Nevertheless M. Molé continued to go practically every evening to the house of Madame de Chateaubriand, whose *salon* had taken the place of Madame de Beaumont's. She lived at the Hôtel de Coislin in the Place Louis XV. Madame de Coislin, a woman of great age but still witty and eager, sometimes came up. Her beauty and the bold and caustic turn of her mind had made her famous at the Court of Louis XV. At the Coislin town house one might see people of all ranks and "it must be admitted, of all sorts" —Clauzel de Coussergues, the Marquis and Marquise de Talaru, Madame de Vintimille—but rarely—and equally rarely, Fontanes, then head of the University; Joubert, friend of his earliest youth, whom Fontanes had made a member of the University Council and who came very seldom; Michaud, first known through the poem, "*Printemps d'un proscrit*," then author of the "*Histoire des Croisades*," and under the Restoration founder and editor of "*La Quotidienne*"; the Abbé Feletz of the "*Journal des Débats*" and "a certain number of supers and flatterers whom Monsieur and Madame de Chateaubriand liked to gather around them."

In January 1806 he suddenly made up his mind and decided to write to Napoleon to ask him for the post of *auditeur*, which he had refused five years before.

He had a very great friend, M. Frédéric d'Houdetot, a

first cousin of his wife. He anticipated or feared that his decision to make his way into public life might prejudice their intimacy and separate him from his friend, who cherished independence perhaps even more than he himself. To avert, if not a rupture, at any rate any cooling in their relations, he suggested to his friend that he should adopt the same course and told him that he would write to the Emperor to ask for two appointments as *auditeur* to the *Conseil d'État*, one for each of them.

M. d'Houdetot protested against the audacity of thus ignoring all the intermediate channels and vowed that the letter would not even be read. Seeing that M. Molé's mind was definitely made up he begged him at any rate to write on his own behalf alone.

Hardly had M. d'Houdetot departed before M. Molé took his pen and coolly drew up his request for M. d'Houdetot as well as himself.

He addressed it simply: "To H.M. the Emperor Napoleon," and had the letter sent to the Tuileries. He then felt somewhat nervous, but was none the less confident of the success of the action and the reception Napoleon would give it. "I had devoted myself," he writes, "to observing from a distance and above all studying his organization through some of the individuals who were in closest touch with him. It seemed to me he believed in youth and liked to gather round him fresh faces without clearly defined political convictions, and who were still wondering whom to respect, admire or attach themselves to. He had also shown a desire to rally to his government the historic names of France, or members of families among which the great offices of Court or State had been handed down from father to son. I therefore assumed that my action, quite unusual though it was, would not be displeasing to him."

He was not mistaken. The next morning he received a ministerial envelope with the stamp : *Secrétairerie d'État.* M. Hugues Maret sent him two copies of two imperial decrees, one of which appointed M. d'Houdetot *auditeur* of the *Conseil d'État*, attached to the War Section, and the other appointed M. Molé *auditeur* attached to the Legislation Section. A personal letter from M. Maret informed him that the Emperor would receive him next morning at nine o'clock in private audience.

He reflected for a while after reading this missive.

" The favour with which I was received and encouraged was in my eyes full of warning. I should perhaps have to defend my independence against it, as also to resist more than once the strongest of all attractions for me, the attraction of a legitimate admiration."

On learning of his appointment M. d'Houdetot was at first highly incensed, but the course of an evening was enough to restore peace between the two friends and d'Houdetot ended up by thoroughly entering into the spirit of the thing.

All agog for a close view of the " extraordinary man before whom vanquished Europe bowed and whom France greeted as her saviour," M. Molé presented himself at the hour fixed at the Tuileries, which he entered for the first time.

On becoming Emperor, Napoleon had lost no time in restoring the formalities and customs of the ancient court, and though occasionally he liked to receive personally those who addressed themselves to him—in order to seem accessible to all—it was a somewhat complicated process to reach his presence. M. Molé had never entered a court and was ignorant of all its customs. When he arrived at the Tuileries he got lost, was obliged to ask his way several times and finally ended up in the household staff's room,

which he was to revisit so frequently and in such different circumstances.

There he witnessed the successive arrival of generals, aides-de-camp, chamberlains, masters of ceremonies, palace prefects and orderly officers composing what was called the household staff, and certain high officials to whom the doors were always open. He would have been incapable of naming a single one. One individual alone struck him by his " calm and commanding " attitude : he seemed the master in this palace. M. Molé enquired of an usher, who replied that this was Duroc, the Grand Marshal.

He had to wait until the staff and the high officials had been admitted and dismissed. When all these had passed through, the resounding voice of the chamberlain at length called out his name. He went in. The Emperor was alone, by the window.

" He let me walk up to him," says M. Molé, " bowing low.

" ' It's to-morrow you take the oath,' he said. ' How old are you ; twenty-six ? '

" ' Only twenty-five, Sire.'

" ' You've just written a good book.'

" I bowed.

" ' Yes, it has good things in it : you've handled very abstract matters and sometimes you arrive at certain results by too many *détours*.'

" ' Sire, I have only followed the natural inclination and tendencies of my mind. When the book was finished I was terrified at the audacity of publishing it at my age. From friends who were thoroughly competent to judge I have had encouragement which has made me feel justified.'

" ' Oh, it's a very good book. You've taken the opposite view to Montesquieu on England and you are nearer the mark than he.'

"'I wrote the two chapters which Your Majesty is good enough to remember in England itself, and under the influence of the impressions I was receiving. I found I had expressed views different from Montesquieu, but my pen would have been frozen with confusion had I thought that anyone reading me might have been reminded of the glorious pages of that great genius.'

"'Now you're overrating Montesquieu. He is better than most of the writers of his century but he failed to be sufficiently independent of the prejudices and fashion of his time. England is prosperous; but England as we see her now has only a hundred years to live.'

"'Does she not owe her prosperity, greatness and power, Sire, to the fact that her institutions are really worked exclusively by an aristocracy which runs the land and preserves its reverence for ancient traditions? If political equality is introduced into England, and instead of the unenvious people of whom I have spoken the lower classes begin to envy the social superiority and even the privileges they now respect, we shall see that fine, great country sink into a revolutionary turmoil worse than that we have passed through ourselves.'

"'They are in a great difficulty now. The composition of their ministry is the proof.'*

"'Sire, it contains a young man who is a great friend of mine: Lord Henry Petty is Chancellor of the Exchequer.'

"'Oh, Erskine?'

"'No, Sire, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lord Henry Petty.'

"'I don't know him.'

"'He had the honour to be presented to Your Majesty.'

"'Has he any family; many relations?'

* Mr. Fox had just formed his cabinet.

"'He's the second son of the Marquis of Lansdowne, famous for his commercial treaty with France; he died recently.'

"'Oh, yes, I remember him! I've seen him but never spoken to him.'

''He's a man of intellect, sound judgment, very cultured and quite precocious. If I'm not mistaken he's a year younger than I, and I feel rather alarmed to find him occupying so important a post.'

"'What does that matter if he's capable? on the contrary. Anyhow we'll see what he can do. They'll have considerable difficulty in replacing M. Pitt. His country needed him.'

"The Emperor paused. I thought it was a sign for me to withdraw. 'Sire,' I resumed, bowing, 'I thank you for admitting me to the Council of State whose work you yourself direct.'

"'You'll be able to follow in the footsteps of your fathers,' he replied with a gesture that seemed to delay my departure.

"'As the Emperor is good enough to refer to my ancestors, may I take the opportunity he gives me of asking him to add to his favours? The decree appointing me *auditeur* assigns me to the Legislative Section and the Ministry of Justice. It seems to point me to a career in the magistracy. Under your government the magistracy has nothing in common with that in which my ancestors served their King and France with so much devotion. The Emperor knows better than I the part played in our history by the *Parlements*, and particularly the *Parlement* of Paris. During our civil wars the distinguished members of that body showed themselves successively to be statesmen, and shrewd and heroic in the hour of danger. I should like to resume the career of my ancestors, Sire, and

for that reason I am asking you to open another to me in which I can follow their example and do everything in my power to imitate their good qualities. Would you be so good as to assign me to the Department of Home Affairs ? All my studies and my tastes have lain in that.'

" ' You surprise me ; your name had left me in no doubt. I felt certain that the magistracy was the career on which you had set your heart.'

" ' Institutions have changed, Sire, entities have been destroyed and traditions broken with. You have restored the great principles of order and social necessity without which no civilized and Christian nation can preserve its existence in the world ; but you have not restored the past. You have not wished to restore the past, and I doubt whether you could have done so. I am trespassing on your patience but allow me to end up by saying that I have never done any law. My mind, left to itself, has fed on general ideas, and, either through lack of judgment or from natural bent, it would find it very difficult to confine itself to the studies and functions of the magistrate.'

" ' Very well, I agree ; you shall be attached to Home Affairs. By the way, who is this M. d'Houdetot who seems to be inseparable from you ? '

" ' Sire, he's the descendant of a noble family which from generation to generation has always shed its blood on the field of battle for France and her Kings. He is the grandson of the famous Madame d'Houdetot.'

" ' Is she still living ? '

" ' Yes, Sire. I married her niece, and family ties and similarity of age as well as tastes have associated M. d'Houdetot and myself in a friendship which will last, I hope, as long as life itself. I cannot express to Your Majesty all my gratitude for this appointment, which I regard as the most valued favour you could have granted me.'

"He gave me a kind nod and I withdrew."

On leaving the Tuileries M. Molé shut himself up at home to reflect on all he had seen and heard, and lost no time in recording his impressions.

"Napoleon's face," he writes, "seen at such close quarters, struck me even more forcibly than the idea I had formed of it. I have always believed in faces. His was in keeping with his whole history. His head was superb and unlike any other. Although I have no great faith in Gael's system, to which I have devoted some study, I thought I could recognize in the depth of his skull, the formation of his splendid forehead, the setting of his eyes, his sculptured lips, the droop at the corners of his mouth, the beautiful proportions of his face and the regularity of his features, but above all in his glance, piercing and veiled rather than gentle, and his smile, more contemptuous than pleasant, and mocking rather than friendly—in all this, as I have said, I thought I could recognize all the qualities which raise a man above his fellows and make him fit to rule them, but none of the qualities or virtues which make him liked, or even simply respected, in all the circumstances of life."

* * *

At the time when M. Molé entered the Council of State the Emperor presided at almost all its sittings. So far Napoleon had only laid the foundations of the edifice he intended to build.

"I should perhaps be more accurate if I did not use the words 'edifice' and 'architect,'" he writes. "At the risk of surprising my readers I must say that he was less architect than workman: though a wonderful organizer a vast plan was always beyond him. There was no part of the great machine which he had not put in place; not

one detail which was too small for his attention ; not one great thought or broad view which could not occur to him. But the ensemble, the proportions, the relations of the various parts to each other, the ties or the art which might have made a whole of them, not only escaped him but were beyond his comprehension. He used all his faculties and all the gifts he had received from heaven with indefatigable energy, but he never felt the absence of those he did not possess."

The sittings of the Council of State were then held at the Tuileries in the room leading into the Throne Room. The young *auditeurs* had no place assigned to them. They sat in any convenient place, behind the councillors.

The first sitting at which M. Molé was present was devoted to a debate on indirect taxation and taxes on consumption. The Republic had abolished them and the Directory had not dared to re-introduce them. This matter was governed by the law of the 5th Ventôse in the year XII, which the First Consul desired to repeal. The reporter was François de Nantes, an old revolutionary, and it appeared that it would be his duty to apply the new law. Thus " it was easy," writes M. Molé, " to guess the reward he expected from his zeal in supporting the Emperor's views."

However, the majority of the Assembly was hostile to the scheme. Almost all the members were revolutionaries by origin and steeped in the principles of the Revolution, and they looked askance at the re-imposition of such unpopular taxation. So Napoleon was seeking to force the capitulation of all these refractory spirits, and the more opposition or dislike a piece of legislation seemed likely to meet with from public opinion, the greater was the importance he attached to its being voted and specifically

approved by the veterans of the Revolution, "resigned rather than converted."

The High Chancellor was presiding at the sitting, and the debate on François de Nantes' report had begun when the Emperor arrived and, sitting down, began by talking about a duty on salt-water fish which was levied by the city of Paris. He knew nothing about the matter and was soon the member of Council who knew it best. In constituting this Council he had designedly introduced men of such varied knowledge that they could be walking encyclopædias to him. He questioned in turn all those members whose functions or studies ought to have made them familiar with import tolls into the towns, or the interests of the fish trade. The replies he received were so accurate and practical as to prove that he knew his encyclopædia and did not turn up the wrong page.

Napoleon looked worried. The old hands warned the younger members that an explosion was to be expected. They were right: the storm burst. Some reply to a question he put as to the yield of the fish duties gave him the excuse. "There are criminal defalcations or glaring abuses in connection with the fish duties as levied to-day," he said, "the Treasury is robbed of one million, eight hundred thousand francs a year. Frauds of this kind, perpetrated in Paris under my very eyes, in my very presence are a scandal, an insult to me," he cried in a voice of thunder; "I want all these thieves executing!* M. Treilhard, can we start an enquiry on the strength of mere suspicion? Must I do it myself through my imperial procurators? Are the existing tribunals and the criminal law adequate to discover and punish the miscreants?" M. Treilhard,

* "It must be remembered that all the Emperor's statements reported here, the most remarkable and the most incongruous alike, are taken textually from the notes I took down on my little *auditeur's* table as he spoke and while I was watching him all the time." (Count Molé's note.)

unprepared for this, replied that everything depended upon the evidence that could be obtained, and that it was quite possible that the criminals—if there were any—might escape scot free.

"Treilhard, a splendid lawyer," says M. Molé, "had been one of the most revolutionary advocates at the Paris bar. He was a member and subsequently President of the Legislation Section which also included the regicide Berthier and Merlin of Douai, another regicide and author of the Law of Suspects, etc. The composition of this Section had been another reason why I did not desire to join it."

When this incident was over the Emperor, who never followed the Order of Proceedings and raised the topics in which he was most interested, looked round for M. Fourcroy and told him to read the report he had drawn up on public education.

"Fourcroy," continues M. Molé, "was unpleasant both in character and manners. Timid, ingratiating and cunning, a bitter foe to all religious teaching, a revolutionary and married to a divorced woman, he was none the less Director-General of Public Education. His lectures on chemistry had made him famous for the elegance of his diction, but he learned them by heart and the meetings of the Council of State had proved that he had no natural fund of eloquence. Napoleon desired to relieve him of a post for which he was so little suited, and had only waited until he thought the time had come to attempt a great reform of public education.

"Thus invited by the Emperor, Fourcroy replied that he had not brought his report for the simple reason that it was not on the Order of the Day. 'Tell us about it,' the Emperor resumed, 'so that the discussion can begin and we can make a start with the question.' Fourcroy

stammered and hesitated. The Emperor opened the debate: 'Of all our institutions public education is the most important. Everything depends on it, the present and the future. It is essential that the morals and political ideas of the generation which is now growing up should no longer be dependent upon the news of the day or the circumstances of the moment. Above all we must secure unity: we must be able to cast a whole generation in the same mould. Men already differ sufficiently in their inclinations, their characters and everything that education does not give and cannot reform. It is now our business to reorganize the instrument and to make teaching a career capable of attracting those to whom it appeals. In the first stages of this career, which demand so much devotion and will certainly provide but slender emoluments for those concerned, it is essential that celibacy should be compulsory. In the lower ranks of the teaching hierarchy the heart must not be distracted by family ties nor the mind by care for the morrow. Marriage will be permitted in the higher ranks. Marriage is the state of perfection according to the lay idea, as celibacy is to the religious idea. It will come to mean both comfort and the reward for a useful life. Finally, as the career of public teaching should be crowned as it deserves, it will provide posts at the top which will place those who hold them among the great dignitaries of the State. Let us have a body of doctrine which does not vary and a body of teachers which does not die.

"'No longer will masters transmit to their pupils their own principles and their own preferences, but the principles and sentiments drawn from the body of which they form part. How can we trust men who have formed themselves to form other men? What man can thread his way unaided through life without any light but his own, and

without drawing on the experience and good sense of others? I know no finer combination than that in which two rival corporations share public teaching in France with the University. Of these two bodies the first, the Jesuits —so frequently attacked by the eighteenth century—has come through the Revolution with its spirit, rules and principles intact. It was persecuted and scattered; it submitted, obeyed and yet emerged always the same wherever it was tolerated. The *Oratoire* had not the same power of resistance; its ties were not so strong and there are no more *Oratorieurs*.

"'The Jesuits must be considered from two points of view. In the Church they were *ultramontane*, soldiers of the Pope, obeying him and him alone and responsible solely to him. In the State they formed an admirable teaching or, rather, educational body, unchanging in its methods and doctrine and having a knowledge of men and society which made the Jesuits even more fitted to make fathers, sons, magistrates, statesmen and even soldiers than to produce savants.'

"At this point," M. Molé continues, "the Emperor glanced round his audience, noting the effect of his words. The more obsequious—or servile, if you like—could not contain their anger or amazement.

"'No doubt no one would think of restoring them,' continued the Emperor, without seeming to have noticed anything, 'but let us try to profit by their example and find another teaching body with their skill.'

"Napoleon felt that it was better that no reply should be given in the midst of all the agitation he had provoked. As a matter of fact Fourcroy had just been dismissed. It was obvious that he was not the man to sustain the Jesuits and give effective support to the opinions just expressed by the Emperor.

"The debate was abruptly interrupted by these words uttered in an authoritative tone: 'We'll resume the liquor question.' The most renowned orators—even those like Defermon, Regnault and Treilhard, who were rivals in self-esteem, jealous of their respective positions and always taking opposite sides—combined to defend the law of direct taxation it was intended to repeal, and to combat the principle of indirect taxes. The removal of the latter had been one of the fundamental principles of the doctrine of the Revolution and another was the establishment of direct taxes on capital. These former revolutionaries, who had become legislators at Napoleon's command, dreaded the extreme unpopularity of the proposals. Treilhard in particular began to prophesy serious collisions between the '*commis des droits réunis*,' as the officials appointed to levy these taxes were then styled, and the people—and even the soldiery. It meant reviving the '*rats de cave*' of the old regime who would not even let an officer remove a bottle of wine from one place to another.

"The Emperor had let them talk without giving the slightest sign of approval or otherwise, but he now interrupted:

"'The tax on stocks,' he said, 'is really, and however described, a tax levied at the source of production, a direct tax paid by the producer. M. Defermon, to disguise the fact and throw dust in the eyes of those who want indirect taxation, has used the argument of a *procureur*. As to the riots and rebellions we are promised, I reply that the people are more law-abiding and submissive than ever before, particularly the soldiery. France, let me remind you, cannot escape heavy taxation. She must have a navy, I don't say equal to England's, but capable of defending her against England, and a larger army than the strongest army in Europe. France has been an object

of envy since Henry IV, and is so still more now that we have become far more than the first nation in Europe. We must maintain the position we have reached. When I have overthrown England I will take off two hundred millions of taxes. As for the measure in question, is it a good one? I will see that it is carried out. Have I not my gendarmes, prefects and priests? If there's a revolt I will have five or six rebels hung and the rest will give way. Before the Revolution, authority had fallen to the petticoat; we had an imbecile King: he was hung and his family has been driven out. We take away the throne and found the Empire. I have an authority and advantages which my successors will be unable to preserve. I must make full use of them to set up a good government and a good system of administration. For the rest I am impartial and disinterested in this matter of taxes; I have not come to beg and I am not asking you for money, as I don't need it.

"'In my budget for this year twenty or thirty millions more or less are nothing to me. In peace time I think seven hundred millions will be enough, but I want to be able to increase it to eight hundred by a stroke of the pen. France *must* pay eight hundred millions in taxation: I will tell her so from my throne, and she will believe me because she has given me her confidence and I have proved that I deserved it. We must vary the taxes to make them seem less heavy. My kingdom of Italy is paying a hundred and ten millions in taxation; that is a good deal, but the sum is to a large extent furnished by indirect taxes. The conquered peoples do not like our rule because we pay more direct and fewer indirect taxes than all others.

"'We cannot hope to disband any considerable part of our armies when peace comes; for between states and

between nations there is no peace, there are only truces. England will make war on us as long as we keep Belgium. Besides we should run the risk of being overtaken. The Germans raise their armies quicker than we do; they have less dash but more obedience. Why is our army the best in Europe? It is not only because its composition is the best but rather because it is the best clothed and fed.* No wretched economies at the expense of my children's stomachs! I have only just conquered Europe, and brought back my army fattened up and with four more campaigns in its inside. It *must* still be our main concern to see that our armies are kept on the present footing: we *must* remember that I alone have three times as many soldiers as Augustus had. I am living only for posterity. I am working to lay foundations. I want to establish a good system of administration. Some fine day, I am confident, we shall see the Western Empire reborn, for the weary peoples will fling themselves under the yoke of the nation which is best governed. And now let us adjourn the discussion. As for the persecution of travellers by the former removal duty, I am very young still, but I remember travelling before the Revolution with three or four bottles in my carriage and not once was I stopped to be searched.'"

The sitting broke up.

"This speech of Napoleon," continues Count Molé, "was longer than I have set down, but I will guarantee the meticulous accuracy with which I have reported—even as he was speaking—the more remarkable of his ideas and the most characteristic features of his language. If History were less an arranged thing, and the contempo-

* "He is omitting the English Army and only means to compare ours with those of the Continent." (Count Molé's note.)

rary or quasi-contemporary historian aimed less at dramatic or literary effect, he would reproduce the speeches of his heroes just as he heard them, or as they were reported to him, and we should have more of those discords, those striking contrasts between the idea we have formed of a man and the words he lets fall from his lips. On this occasion Napoleon had mentioned Louis XVI, referring to him as 'imbecile,' and stating that he had been 'hung.' In his eyes a king who had allowed himself to be dethroned was an 'imbecile,' and none of his moral qualities, however high they might be, deserved to figure in his estimate.

"A dethroned king, whatever else he might be, was the object of his contempt. He knew as well as anyone what had been the manner of the unfortunate king's death, but that word 'hung,' which fell from his lips with a revolting indifference and scorn, was addressed to these regicides and all the revolutionaries of the Council of State whose suspicions he desired to allay* at the moment when they were about to identify themselves with the restoration of a vast system of indirect taxes, incompatible with the memories and doctrines of the Revolution. He believed that a mind—or, to speak as he thought—a genius such as his could be indifferent to all traditions, even that of misfortune; that to admire or respect was to lose independence, and that this royalty itself, this sovereign power, in the interests of which he demanded so much homage and submission from the multitude, was to him simply an object of examination and analysis. He often spoke of them as a chemist speaks of some substance which he dissolves and puts together again when and how he likes."

* "Such language about the martyr king suddenly brought to mind the murder of the Duc d'Enghien. Both Napoleon's horrible words and his crime were the pledges he gave to the revolutionary party." (Count Molé's note.)

During the first few months of his appointment as auditor M. Molé saw the Emperor only at the Council of State. The chief subject of debate was the question of indirect taxes, which he had decided to restore, and the organization of an imperial university which would place all the education of the youth of the country in the hands of the Government.

At the following sitting the Emperor resumed the question of the Paris *octrois* and the fish duties, and questioned the Prefects of Police and the Seine, who were both Councillors of State (unattached); Dubois was Prefect of Police, Frochot of the Seine. There was bitter rivalry between them. Dubois favoured the *status quo*, which left in his hands the appointment of the *facteurs*, officials appointed to gather in considerable sums. "A blind instrument of absolute power, he sought his fortune in the favour of the master, and never thought of softening the rigour or harshness of the measures he carried out by any of those conciliatory practices which, far from being a breach of his mandate, would have rendered their execution more easy and intelligent."

Frochot, formerly a servant and admirer of Mirabeau, had imbibed the political and economic principles of '89 and still maintained their theories. He was very friendly with Regnault. No man was less capable than Napoleon of concealing the impression men made upon him, and the measure of regard or contempt he felt for them. He despised Dubois and cordially disliked Frochot. He kept Dubois because he knew that he had only to nod to make the man do any sort of job, and he did not get rid of Frochot because the latter struck him as an intelligent and honest administrator, and he saw no one to take his place.

Frochot proposed to confirm the levy for the benefit of

the city of Paris, a change which would have brought him in a larger sum than had been received hitherto. "As Dubois persisted in defending his collectors, the Emperor cried: 'A fixed number of collectors are appointed by the Prefect of Police, so it is a privilege. Why should we not say to the collectors, without disturbing the existing arrangement: "pay for your privilege"!' This obviously involved revising all the terms of the collectors' engagements when they were appointed, and in fact, taking away their livelihood, but," writes M. Molé, "I hasten to say that Napoleon never had the slightest scruple about encroaching upon vested interests, or even breaking contracts, to attain the end he had in view, and the pursuit of which claimed too much of his attention, so long as the ardour of pursuit lasted."

From the Paris *octroi* duties the Council passed to the customs duties on the frontier. M. Collin, Director of Customs, M. Réal and M. Bérenger and others participated in the discussion. The Emperor closed this discussion, during which he had betrayed no trace of bodily or mental weariness. A large number of hands was raised in favour of the project and none was raised against it.

The liquor law was resumed. Everything possible had been said on this subject. The Emperor alone showed no aversion to continuing the discussion. He desired to beat his adversaries by sheer weariness. The High-Chancellor, "whose features expressed a boredom verging on desperation," repeated the arguments of the defenders of the scheme and begged that the debate might end, "as if his personal existence was involved." It seemed as if by tacit agreement the opposing parties desired to convey to each other that they had resisted to the very limit of the possible, and that the Emperor wished it to

look as if he had adopted so unpopular a system of taxation only after hearing the most competent authorities and satisfying himself that the interests of France and the Treasury did not allow him to hesitate.

From the liquor question the Council passed to the customs duties, and then the tobacco duties. The Emperor joined in the discussion and was evidently turning to advantage what he heard from the greatest experts on each subject. He often deserted the immediate question under debate and, rising to general considerations, "strove constantly to familiarize the revolutionaries in his audience with his ideas of power and government, and to make them realize that in submitting to be intelligent and docile instruments of his designs, the way to fortune and honours would open before them."

In the course of the debate on the tobacco question, someone alluded to encroachments of the proposed system on the rights of property. The Emperor broke in : " It's the same with administrative liberty, I mean the liberty which administration leaves, and also that liberty which is usually more particularly described as civil liberty—which the courts protect. These two liberties cease to exist the moment they cease to have limits ; without limits they are without guarantees."

It was in the early days of March of this same year (1806) that Fourcroy read his report on public education. Napoleon had sent his work back to him several times with a view to its being modified or recast. Obviously his intention in so doing was to show up his incompetence, and lower him in the opinion of all his colleagues, before parting with him finally, as he had long intended to do. In his report Fourcroy proposed an educational scheme rejected by men of religion and the classically minded, and quite contrary to the Emperor's views.

When the reading of the report was over the Emperor addressed the Council.*

"Before making up our minds on the part priests are to play in education, let us fully consider the part they have played in the world and will always play. There have always been two forces among men, material force exerted by soldiers, and moral force exerted by priests. The Romans, to whom we must always return, did not separate civil from military power. Constantine was the first to use the priests to carry out that separation. Did not Clovis found his monarchy through them? Why, since the Roman Empire all monarchies have been founded in the same way, by supporting themselves on the same force, that is the priests.

"The Prussian monarchy alone, wholly military, is without civil power. As it is Lutheran it was unable to use the priests. In Austria, on the other hand, the civil power balances the military power through the priests. In France, as you know, the *Parlement* joined hands with the priests, made an alliance with them and formed a formidable power which was capable of opposing the Court and the feudal *seigneurs*, in a word the soldiers. How often have priests and monks saved Europe from the oppression of men of war and military power? Julian became an apostate to escape the thrall of the bishops who opposed his authority. Among us, the Revolution destroyed the civil power; we must recreate it, and we cannot use the elements of which it was exclusively composed in other days. The clergy has lost its wealth and will never again form an

* "I am using exclusively here the notes I took as he was speaking. His rapid, staccato method of speaking—stamped with his irritation at the fact that the right expression did not come to him quickly enough—compelled me to put down (and that by abbreviations) the most striking features. But as my greatest fear is of making him say something he did not say and to alter the physiognomy of his language, I prefer to rely exclusively on my notes and to give in a few lines some idea of a speech which was rather long and wholly improvised." (Count Molé's note.)

order in the state: henceforth the civil power can be composed only of the body whose mission it will be to train our youth, and of the magistrates whose function is to do justice and see the laws carried out.

"To that end we must attract men to these two careers by the hope of great prestige and wealth. The Senate has already done that great work. Many men are entering the public service with the idea of making good there. We must fight that tendency of our too feeble nerves which makes work and effort feared, and induces men quietly to enjoy what they have and are without seeking either advancement or renown. That temper of mind is universal in Europe. People live in the country and remain indifferent to the fate of their native land. In Austria I have seen many men of merit who are stubbornly determined to live in this fashion. I do not know where all this will lead us, but when the good take a back seat the wicked take heart of grace. As for the magistrates I am waiting for the report for which I have asked the Chief Justice.

"In this order there is no hope as things are now. The judge who works must earn far more than one who does not. Naturally we must bring it about that a judge who works well can earn twenty-five thousand francs a year. There are twenty-seven Courts of Appeal in France. We must see that the posts of First President and Imperial Procurator of these Courts are very great offices."

Reverting abruptly from the judiciary to public education, and particularly to that of girls, he added:

"As regards women it is very difficult to draw up a scheme of education for them. It must begin and continue with the examples they find in their own homes. Nothing can take a mother's place with her daughter. Girls have

the same end in view in entering life, I mean marriage, and public education almost always makes bad women, flighty, coquettish and unstable. We have not far to go to find proof.* Education in common, which is so good for men, especially for teaching them to help each other, and prepares them by comradeship for the battle of life, is a school of corruption for women. Men are made for the full glare of life. Women are made for the seclusion of family life and to live at home."

The sitting broke up.

* "We all thought that this shaft of the Emperor's was hurled against the school and pupils of Madame Campan. Hortense de Beauharnais, later Queen of Holland, and most of the great ladies of Josephine's palace under the Consulate, had been educated there." (Count Molé's note.)

CHAPTER IV

Organization of the Council of State.—Portraits of the High Treasurer, Lebrun, and the High Chancellor, Cambacérès.—The orators of the Council of State.—Portraits of Berlier, Merlin of Douai, Treilhard, Regnault de Saint-Jean d'Angély.—M. Molé's reflections on the men employed by Napoleon.—The debate on burials.—Napoleon's words on the necessity of religion.—Napoleon's ironic remarks to Regnault de Saint-Jean d'Angély.—The Emperor proposes to modify the powers of the Council of State to avoid arbitrary action.—Napoleon as orator.—The special tribunals.—M. Molé's opinions.—The law on teaching.—Portrait of Joubert.—Napoleon's speech on the religious orders.—The Jesuits.—The salt debate.—Napoleon's remark on the secret of government.

CHAPTER IV

M. MOLÉ was beginning to know his Council of State and familiarize himself not only with its business but its personalities. He came to know the different branches of administration and perfected his knowledge, but at the same time he observed men and did not resist the pleasure of giving us, when and how he liked, the portraits of those who crossed his path.

In the absence of the Emperor the High Chancellor Cambacérès presided as of right, and when the latter was away the High Treasurer, Lebrun, presided. During the seven years M. Molé sat in this assembly the High Treasurer presided only three or four times. "He was a handsome old man who did not like business and at bottom was more of a literary man than a politician. In his youth he had drafted, in an excellent style, the speeches and proclamations delivered or countersigned by Chancellor Maupeou, and he had made an exceptionally elegant translation of Tasso which is still read."

Cambacérès on the other hand was a consummate man of business and a learned lawyer. "Formerly a member of the Convention, he had come through the Revolution, the principal object of his activities being to survive it. Instead of seeking his safety in obscurity, he had dashed through the storm without making any effort to avert it; having no other idea than to save his own life he waited until circumstances pointed him out to the party which had gained the upper hand, and was entering into a period of organization. Then his judicial mind, fertile in varied combinations, made him sought after by men of action who were embarrassed by their victory and wanted to

give their success the sanction of law. His luck in finding such a man had been a memorable part of the Emperor's good fortune. No one was more suited to teach him—without boasting of it—everything he knew least about. No one could put more learning and skill into justifying his despotic acts by legal forms and giving an appearance of right to his most violent audacities. When he was presiding the debate very soon came to the point. He had marvellous skill in anticipating by a short and lucid summary objections which might spin out the debate. The four section presidents, among whom he always took his place, knew that the unfailing way of pleasing him and earning his good will was to end the sitting as soon as possible."

Each section of the Council of State had its accredited orators for each piece of business. In matters of finance there was M. Defeunon, President of the Finance Section, and his assistant, Boulay de la Meurthe. To this section Bérenger also was attached. He was an economist of the English school, the only man there in possession of a few sound ideas on credit, and as he dared not attack the Emperor's despotic behaviour in fiscal measures he avenged himself by poking fun at his two colleagues.

In questions of legislation the orator was Berlier, a regicide and republican who had voted against the Empire. "His honeyed tongue," says M. Molé, "his timid and wavering gaze, and his impassive though insinuating expression, gave him almost the outward appearance of Molière's Tartuffe, though in his behaviour and language he more nearly resembled a republican regicide." In this section too was Merlin of Douai, the author of the Law of Suspects, and so many other legislative crimes. This is how Count Molé describes him:

"He was an object of lively antipathy to all the young

men of the Council of State—many of them owed to him the long imprisonment or revolutionary death of their parents. I doubt whether any face was ever a more faithful mirror of the man behind it. Thin and slender, his lanky figure and timid, tottering steps reminded one of those ferocious but cowardly animals which prowl abroad at night to surprise their prey in its sleep. He had short hair, curled and powdered, spectacles which seemed to be a mask rather than an extension of his eyes, and thin lips like those of a cat or hyena—animals with a natural taste for blood. He kept in the background, said nothing throughout a whole sitting and was particularly mute when the debate became warm or the Emperor talked what they liked to call reaction. But he was wide awake to all that was going on before him; he watched every movement and every gesture of the speaker, and he was always rubbing one hand with the thumb of the other, as if this mechanical and vulgar movement absorbed his physical activity in such a way as to release his mental powers.

"The Emperor, as I think I have said, questioned him as if opening his famous encyclopædia at the word on which he desired information. When Merlin spoke, Treilhard, Berlier, and even Regnault, listened with marked curiosity and deference, the object of which was the author of the Law of Suspects quite as much as the learned and clever lawyer. I always enjoyed studying the faces and observing the externals of all these ex-revolutionaries, now in possession of place and wealth, by whom I was surrounded. I cannot say too often that not one of them seemed equal to him as expressing the type of the subtle lawyer, pitiless, dead to all human sympathy and endeavouring to clothe the most atrocious and blood-stained despotism in the forms of law and even those of justice."

Without any gift of speech, he was none the less the most learned of lawyers. The Emperor *ran through him* just as he would have run through the encyclopædia of jurisprudence of which he was the author. The man most to Napoleon's taste in these matters was an ex-advocate, Treilhard. "He had a naturally crooked mind and, equally naturally, revolutionary views. He had always envied those above him socially, and luck alone perhaps had prevented him from distinguishing himself by crimes he never had a chance of committing."*

The President of the Section of the Interior (Home Affairs) was Regnault de Saint-Jean d'Angély. Having been somewhat prominent in 1791 he had spent the time of the Terror in getting himself forgotten. What distinguished him and put him above all the others was a marvellous gift of understanding and fluency. "He knew how to hold himself in and also when to say nothing, and he never wearied us, although he hardly ever gave utterance to a word worth remembering, a fruitful idea or a lofty thought. Corrupt in character, and spending too much money not to be too fond of receiving or making it, he had a marked preference for debates in which generalities were bandied about and—like those on public education—he could indulge his aversion to priests and religion, of which he spoke with the cynicism of the eighteenth century."

As President of the Section of the Interior it was his function to distribute the business between the auditors of that section. As he rather disliked M. Molé he gave him trivial and thankless jobs. Occasionally he went so far as to pay him some compliment, "anything but sincere," as M. Molé writes, but he avoided bringing him forward

* It must be remembered that Count Molé's father had been one of the victims of the revolutionary tribunals.

and never entrusted any important piece of work to him.

The origin of this antipathy was undoubtedly those religious feelings M. Molé never attempted to hide, and also the fact that the latter refused to join the country house-parties he had on Sundays.

Regnault de Saint-Jean d'Angély was endowed with a prodigious power of work. The Emperor sent him a mass of questions and matters of all kinds to study and examine. Regnault worked day and night, though he did not let that "prevent him from indulging any of his coarse tastes." If an answer was at all possible he found it at once, and reflection or meditation could add nothing to it. For these reasons Napoleon put him in the front rank of his instruments. "'What a pity it is,' he said to me some years later," writes M. Molé, "'that Regnault is so fond of money and the pleasures it gives! He would be a splendid Minister of the Interior, and I've never been able to find one!'

"In short," continues M. Molé, "I should say of the Council of State and the members of that assembly what has been said with so much truth of our great armies, and the generals who commanded them. When Napoleon was at their head they became irresistible and the generals under his orders all seemed great captains. When he was absent those armies had difficulty in holding their own, and the lieutenants of Napoleon quarrelled, were jealous of each other and could do nothing. The long horseshoe table of the Council of State, with its array of men of such varied origins and opinions—not one of whom could be described as a great mind or of exceptional talents—was simply transformed when the organizing genius appeared on a dais at the end of the horseshoe. Under his hand it then became a clavier from which he drew sweet sounds and graceful improvisations, the result being due far less to

the instrument than to him who had the secret of using it.

"I should say the same of all those whom Napoleon employed both in the Civil Service and in the Army: by putting them into the right place and simply asking of them what they knew and what they could do, he doubled their accomplishments and their success. After Napoleon's fall I have seen the same men employed under the Restoration; they no longer justified the idea they had given one of themselves. One might often compare men to the figure "0" which owes all its importance to the number preceding it. Take away Louis XIV and no man can say how far all those great captains, great judges and great writers would have got without him—with less encouragement and support, and obliged to make their own way. But without Napoleon we have seen what became of his lieutenants, Councillors of State and so many others who shone only in the reflection of his glory and genius."

At the sitting of March 4, during a debate on burials, there was some question of the remuneration demanded by undertakers. "What does it cost a man to be buried?" he said. "I don't mean the rich man, I'm not worrying about him. He is buried as he wishes, with pomp, simplicity, with Christian rites or otherwise. But what about the small trader, the artisan, the workman or the poor? What do they have to pay to the undertaker, the municipality and the priest?"

Regnault de Saint-Jean d'Angély did not lose this opportunity of attacking the priests. He described them as extorting money even from those who could not pay for the four boards of their coffins, and refusing their intercession for those from whom they could extract nothing.

"If you want to know the truth," cried Napoleon, "M. Regnault is a philosopher; he hates the priests

NAPOLEON AT MALMAISON.

From an engraving after the picture by Isabey.

and would have us believe that they are all like a few of their number—very few—unworthy of the name, whom he has met somewhere or other. Let us get back to facts: the consolations of religion during life and its prayers after death must be available to all. The man who forgets this or thinks otherwise has not read the Scriptures. In this connection I call to mind an abuse which is much more real, a scandal which is going on in the full light of day: I mean the spectacles which are given every day in the churches, the choral masses—with the finest singers from the opera accompanied by the orchestra*—which people cannot see or hear except on payment at the door. I do not mind there being a few better places, or a few more comfortable seats let to those prepared to pay for them, but the body of the church must be free and open to all.

"What can be more wicked, impolitic, anti-social and anti-Christian than to make it difficult for the people to go to church? It means not hearing the mystery of religion. The mystery is not that of the incarnation. The latter I do not discuss, any more than any other dogma. But I see in religion the whole mystery of society. I maintain that it is there in its entirety, and that without the precepts and doctrines of the Scriptures no society can flourish, and there can be no true civilization.

"What is it that makes the poor man think it quite natural that there are ten fires in my palace while he is dying of cold; that I have ten coats in my wardrobe while he goes naked; that at each of my meals enough is served to feed his family for a week? It is simply religion, which tells him that in another life I shall be only his equal and that he actually has more chance of being happy

*"He is alluding more especially to the masses of this kind celebrated at Saint Roche, one of which had taken place quite recently." (Count Molé's note.)

there than I. Yes, we must see to it that the floors of the churches are open to all and that it does not cost the poor man much to have prayers said on his tomb. I say it must not cost him much, for we must be careful not to insult him by suggesting that he should be buried free. We must carefully preserve for him what remains of his dignity. It is that sentiment which throughout life keeps him from crime."

No conclusion was reached and the debate resolved itself into conversation, as often happened when the Emperor was presiding.

The discussion turned to other subjects, and a scheme was read the object of which was to transform the Council of State in certain cases into a Council of *parties*. Thinking it pleased the Emperor, some members often gave the name of bygone institutions to schemes which radically differed from them. Sometimes this was not to his liking, and then he never concealed his irritation with the clumsy flatterer; he would shrug his shoulders and point out the fundamental clash between the old names and the new institutions.

"This idea means nothing," said the Emperor impatiently. "This is how it looks to me:

"Plunderers of the public treasury and similar malefactors escape justice or justice is too slow in reaching them. What happens? To get something done and make retributive justice prompt and effective, I am forced into arbitrary acts which appear tyrannical. In my reign the only drawback to this is a momentary outcry, because I always preserve a measure of moderation and never abuse my power, and particularly the confidence the nation places in me. But the moderation of my successors cannot

be counted on to the same degree, nor the influence they will have over the French people who willingly obey none but a sovereign of whom they are proud, and whom they think strong enough to bring them back to obedience if they lapse. We must create sound institutions which will make it unnecessary for my successors to have the same advantages as myself. We must carefully define the offences which will be judged and punished by the Council of State, and the cases in which it will constitute a civil or criminal tribunal for that purpose. Then I shall cease to appear in it, no doubt.

"In France the sovereign should never act as judge: we have left the times of Saint Louis behind us. Our customs and ideas are opposed to it. I know from experience that it is not the same everywhere. In Egypt I made myself respected by doing justice in person. But here it would be quite otherwise. Let us therefore establish a sound institution as I ask you, and it will make it less frequently necessary for me to resort to arbitrary methods, and my successors will find it well established. I know that it will be of no avail under a feeble-minded prince, but in those circumstances nothing will avail, for I do not believe that this country will ever again allow itself to be governed by any prince who is a fool. We need only anticipate what is probable. Princes of average intelligence are by far the most common, and they can govern very well if they find good machinery of government to their hand."

The Emperor ceased speaking and abruptly ended the sitting.

"I am sure," continues Count Molé, "that none of those who try to form an idea of this extraordinary man can suspect the poor sense of logic—I might almost say the confusion of ideas—which reigned in his mind, of

which perhaps the most salient characteristic was its inexhaustible verve.

"Those who heard some of these speeches in public were always talking of his *jerky* phrasing. The adjective is far more appropriate to his processes of thought. Sitting hunched up in the chair in which he presided over the Council of State, composed, lost in thought to the point of forgetting where he was and even those to whom he was speaking, his eyes fixed on nothing; that long, small gold snuff box which he was always mechanically opening to help himself to a pinch of snuff, which he took quite noiselessly, and most of which fell on the white lapel of his uniform until it was quite dusted with it, and last but not least the mechanical movement of his arm in handing back the snuff box to the chamberlain, who soon filled it up and returned it—all this was so eminently the picture of a man meditating in solitude that all the eyes fixed on his face observed him in silence, and everyone took care to make no noise for fear of disturbing an internal process of which the end and product were awaited with curiosity.

"As soon as his thought took shape he let it fall from his lips, indifferent to the form in which it was clothed. Little he cared for the matter in debate. Contemptuous of all set rules, placing himself above the conventions, he regarded as the privilege of his superiority over other men the right of thinking aloud and letting his brain conceive and his mouth utter, relying on the attention and respect with which his slightest word was received by his hearers, the most eminent of which felt themselves a long way inferior to him. He had no fear of finding himself contradicting himself. With his ingenuity in discovering subtle and plausible reasons in support of all opinions, he attached less importance to selecting them well than to proving that his mind revolved every aspect of every question, and

that there was not a single idea they could suggest which had not already occurred to him.

"But in the heat of the debate, and sometimes under the influence of contrariness—for he usually liked the discussion to be free and full—he was led on to support both the *pro* and the *con*, the *con* becoming revenge for those whom the *pro* had offended; and if, for instance, he attacked the Jesuits—whom he had praised only the day before—a satisfied and keen look from M. Regnault told him that philosophy was still counting on him. His position in the Council between two parties which hated each other thus became for him something which is a mistake for everyone, a matter of tactics and skill. Moreover, these two parties, amazed at such a display of resource and ingenuity to bring them together, instead of breaking them, persuaded themselves more and more that if he did not give them entire satisfaction he would at any rate save them from being delivered to their adversaries or humiliated before them."

In the sitting of March 8 the Council of State was concerned with a draft bill for making the gendarmes triable by the special tribunals. The Emperor opposed the scheme.

"The special tribunals," he said, "have been created for punishing crimes of the moment, particularly the forgeries with which we were inundated: these crimes are diminishing. Before long the special tribunals will become unnecessary. Don't let us prolong their existence by extending their functions. It would be much better simply to restore the *prévôtal* courts, the utility and even the necessity of which could be supported."

"As I heard these words," writes Count Molé, "I remembered how he had employed a Military Commission to murder the last heir of the most warlike and glorious

branch of the House of Bourbon. The Emperor was wrong in classing military commissions among the tribunals. Nothing is less like a Court of Justice than such a commission, and nothing is less in accordance with the ordinary rules of justice than the judgments it pronounces. The Military Commission must not be confused with the Council of War. The former, with hardly an exception, is only a creation of the stronger to satiate anger or wreak vengeance; the second is a special, though ordinary, tribunal, the constitution of which has been prescribed legally beforehand for the purpose of trying special individuals and crimes. What the soldier must always have in mind in sitting in judgment on another soldier is the maintenance of that principle of obedience on which the whole composition of the army depends. But when it is a question of trying other persons or other crimes and offences, the principle of passive obedience corrupts the judge's mind and robs him of his independence in the use of the powers with which his exceptional functions endow him."

* * *

The Public Education Bill was resumed in the sitting of March 11. Napoleon took part in the debate and expressed views clearly conflicting with those he had put forward at a previous sitting. "Reading what follows," writes Count Molé, "everyone will be convinced of this fact, that he never had half the sense of logic and proportion which have been attributed to him. Influenced mainly by the conditions of the moment, some accidental circumstance perhaps, or—as he has told me more than once—his temper, health and the feeling of physical fitness or otherwise which it gave him, he gave utterance to opinions wholly opposed to those he had previously

expressed, for he despised men too much to worry about inconsistencies from which any other man would have shrunk."

When he came to the Council of State that day Napoleon had already decided to ruin Fourcroy and make him impossible, even in the eyes of his friends, as head of the Public Education Department.

Count Molé describes this sitting in the following terms :

"Napoleon let him read his fresh report (the third). 'Has not my idea been grasped even now?' he cried. 'Did I not make myself clear?' Here everyone, including Fourcroy himself, shouted out, 'Yes, yes, yes!' He developed it again, presenting it without all the preliminary considerations on which he had embarked the first time. Joubert who, like the whole Council, remembered his praise of the Jesuits, thought he would please him by dropping his ambiguous attitude and so argued confidently that education in France should be put in the hands of a religious body. He put forward the most convincing reasons.

"Joubert, a particular friend of the High Chancellor and subsequently Governor of the Bank of France, was the kindliest of egotists ; he was pretty popular with the young men, though they made fun of his fine figure—which was said to resemble Louis XV's—his rounded limbs, weakness in the knee and soft, amorous eyes. Though he was without real talent or any noteworthy aptitude for business, he was perfectly familiar with the latter, and in any age would have been useful and agreeable to a minister or prince who wanted a subordinate distinguished among subordinates.

"The Emperor, who hated to be regarded as bound by anything he had said, and would never allow himself to be tied down sooner than he wished, immediately argued the contrary. In doing so he certainly weighed

the arguments for and against, but above all he professed respect for what he called the spirit of his time and the results of a revolution which he desired to *end, but not disavow.* After analysing the advantages and drawbacks of religious orders, and reminding his audience of the good they had done as well as the abuses and excesses into which they had fallen, he said that it did not depend upon him, and that as a matter of fact it was beyond anyone's power to restore them, and there would be no more monks because vows were forbidden before the age of twenty-one."

" In another forty years," he cried, " and without some upheaval, all the religious orders will be extinct. To establish a new order to-day, or even re-establish one of the old ones, would require not only examples and the authority of a saint, but also men capable of being moved.

" It was not to train and educate the young that monks originally came into existence. Their only object was to flee from the world and its dangers, and bring the blessing of heaven upon the earth by their prayers. Fanaticism was the principle and foundation of the religious orders. They came to us from the desert. Some man of lofty spirit took to solitude and practised incredible austerities until the spectacle which his manner of life afforded attracted the inhabitants of the country round. From the brain of this recluse, whom you can call a saint or what you like, emerged a system of discipline under which those souls which faith or fanaticism illumined came to range themselves.

" The Popes gave the monks all the support in their power ; they were their soldiers. I am only a temporary potentate, my sole concern being the welfare of men upon earth, and particularly the best means of making them live together as a society—a matter which is becoming

increasingly difficult—and I must not waste myself in vain efforts to revive useless or conventional virtues such as chastity and many others. When I am told that priests should remain celibate, I believe it because Mother Church has so ordained and it is our duty to believe it. But as we have no more monks now it is not to my interest, nor is it in my power to restore them. I am bound to fear a single teaching body imbued with religious ideas, and far more in the hands of the Church than in mine. If I wanted to commit the education of the young to religious orders, I would much prefer that there should be several engaged in teaching rather than have but one."

"In this speech, the conclusion of which is not in my notes," writes Count Molé, "what a wealth of false judgments, historical errors, current prejudices and also philosophical and revolutionary dogmas can we trace in a mind—and so superior a mind—which the practice of government, no less than experience, was correcting every day! The professed respect for the celibacy of priests, because 'holy Mother Church' had enjoined it, was more than counterbalanced by the funeral oration on the orders which had preceded it. The faces of the audience, that of Joubert in particular, expressed that unctuous approval which the toady always bestows upon his master. But the philosophers, Regnault and Fourcroy for example, betrayed real delight at what they had just heard. They were not satisfied, but at any rate they were reassured; they ceased to fear a religious reaction which might prejudicially affect their ambitions and position in the government."

The next sitting was devoted to the debate on communal property and the salt duty. It was marked by Napoleon's intervention on these two subjects.

The Council was considering means of regulating the exercise of the right of property for the communes :

" The communes," he said, " are not property owners in the real sense. There is no property without the right of use and abuse. The communes cannot use their property without my authorization to do so, and it is my duty to prevent them from abusing it. They are minors who would squander their fortune and get into debt if a firm and wise tutor did not prevent them."

Discussing the salt question, Defermon and Treilhard expressed their regret that a duty should be restored which falls so hardly on the poor in certain parts of France. Napoleon broke in :

" It is being spread abroad that I want to restore the salt tax. You know what a travesty of my intentions that is. I do not wish to restore the salt tax as I think that would serve no useful purpose. If I thought it a useful thing and good in itself, I can assure you I should certainly be bold enough to introduce it, notwithstanding all the barkers in the world and whether it cost me my life or not. I am sometimes fox and sometimes lion. The whole secret of government consists of knowing when to be the one and when the other."

" At this point, unfortunately," writes Count Molé, " my notes, taken as the Emperor was actually speaking, desert me. I am obliged to have recourse to memories gathered otherwise which have remained duly stamped on my mind. In my '*Memoires*'* I have given a long description of everything relating to the appointment of

* Count Molé is alluding here to that part of his memoirs which is now missing.

Fontanes as Chancellor of the University. He was as cunning as a fox in preparing the philosophic party to admit such a selection, and in convincing the friends of Fourcroy himself of the impossibility of leaving him in charge of public education.

"But I cannot say what is to become of my memoirs—and they have made but little progress—and what my ultimate intentions are as to their future. It is because I despair of finishing them that I wish to save my relations with Napoleon from oblivion. It is to me a matter of importance, great importance I freely admit, that those who come after me and will not have known this extraordinary man, should read the estimate of him at which I have arrived. Perhaps there is no one who has been in a better position—and, dare I add, more suited—than I to form a really accurate judgment. Powers such as his were of a nature to excite my warmest admiration, but I am too conscious of truth, that beauty in which goodness and worth are closely knit in greatness, to fail to distinguish the man from the powers, and not to have observed, when it occurred, how often the mind in that exceptional character was able to do without soul or heart.

"If at this point I warn my reader that my notes, and the other sources from which I am drawing my recollections, have come to an end, it is because I want him to moderate his confidence in me and judge of the authenticity of the facts for the truth of which I have vouched. I make but one claim, that I am the most accurate and faithful of chroniclers. I was born with perhaps an excessive love of truth. It has me under its spell, and it may well happen that I shall tell the truth to my own prejudice when it might pay me, as others, to keep silence. With this warning I continue my story and proceed towards my goal with a sense of perfect security."

CHAPTER V

The question of the Jews in Alsace.—Relations between the Minister of the Interior and the Chief Justice.—The President of the Section of the Interior invites Count Molé to go into the history of the Jews since the fall of Jerusalem. —Count Molé reports to Regnault de Saint-Jean d'Angély.—Conversation with the latter.—Regnault sets a trap for him.—Portrait of Beugnot.—His opinion about the Jews.—Beugnot as reporter.—Debate on the Jewish question at the Council of State in Napoleon's presence.—Napoleon has Count Molé's work published in the "*Moniteur*."—Molé is sent for by Napoleon.—Napoleon's views on the question.—The decree of May 30, 1806.—Decree of March, 1807, creating reporters in the Council of State.—M. Thiers' misconception of this measure.—Opinion of Thiers.—The new reporters.—M. Thiers' mistake on the subject of these appointments. Count Molé puts it right.—Portrait of the Baron de Fréville.—Claims committee.—First civil and political assembly.—The Grand Sanhedrin.—Explanation of the word "order" in the light of the Emperor's views.—M. Furtado.—Composition of the Jewish Assembly.—Count Molé says a little about himself.—Report of the three commissaries.—Napoleon tires of this affair.—Lack of logic in the Emperor's ideas.

CHAPTER V

ABOUT this time, by a most extraordinary chance, an important question which was referred to the Section of the Interior in the Council of State attracted the Emperor's attention to M. Molé. The Minister of the Interior and the Chief Justice had made separate reports to the Emperor upon the unhappy position of the landowners in the departments formed of the former provinces of Alsace and Lorraine. A large number of them had been forced to borrow from the Jews—who are very numerous in that region—at more than usurious rates of interest, and to mortgage their real estate to secure their liberty (imprisonment for debt was then in force). Practically the whole of the land, said the two ministers, was about to pass into the hands of the Jews. The President of the Section, "almost distracted, no doubt," as Count Molé writes, "gave me the voluminous files attached to the two reports to examine. 'You'll have to make some research into the condition of the Jews,' he said, 'from the fall of Jerusalem down to the present time, all over the world, and more particularly in Europe and France.'"

The matter caught his fancy; it seemed to him one of the most important on which he had ever been engaged and interested him enormously. "I was not quite a stranger to this question," he writes, "for I knew and believed what religion teaches us of the curse resting upon this nation. I had sought more than once for some explanation of their strange morality in the matter of money-lending to Christians, and in pursuing my studies on this question had ended up by asking whether Christians and Christian governments had not also their duties towards

these people, and if the first of these duties was not to make them more honest if they could not convert them. All these questions, which had more than once claimed my youthful time and interest, at once came to mind, and I was very glad of the opportunity which now occurred of examining them again, and from a practical point of view. I therefore greedily snatched the mass of papers which was entrusted to me : I carried them off to my carriage and began my examination the very next morning."

He immediately realized that the mischief of which the landowners of Alsace and Lorraine complained was real, and that its seriousness had been in no way exaggerated. Neither of the two ministers suggested any remedy. Napoleon had simply annotated their reports with a few comments indicating that he would not shrink from arbitrary measures, nor hesitate to reduce or even cancel the mortgages.

To meet M. Regnault's wishes, Count Molé searched the Imperial Library for all books appearing to bear on the subject and set to work with the greatest industry. He toiled all day there, stopping only for his meals, and even part of the night. He made a somewhat massive compilation, " which was far from being worth the effort it cost me," he writes.

He handed the fruits of his labour to M. Regnault, telling him that if he would call the Section together he would outline his work, and the measures required to remedy the evils which had been discovered, and prevent their recurrence. M. Regnault thought it impertinent of Count Molé to have an opinion when he had only been asked to look into the question. " I'll summon the Section," he replied drily, " and read your researches into the conditions of the Jews beforehand."

Two days later he asked him what were his views as

to the remedy, and especially the measures to be taken to avoid a recurrence of a similar situation.

"The Jews are expiating their crime," Count Molé replied; "I'm certain of that. Nothing can explain their situation, even in the eyes of cold reason, which does not allow for the curse which rests upon them. But I do not think that we ought to make ourselves responsible for carrying out the judgment upon them. They are human beings, and for that reason we ourselves and all governments have certain duties towards them. The first is to initiate them into the observance of civil virtues and a moral code which will make them cease from being so harmful to the Christians among whom they live, and whose protection can alone save them from the prejudice, and frequently the anger, they inspire."

"Wait a moment!" M. Regnault broke in, "I can't adopt your point of view. The Jews have been degraded by the long persecution by Christian prejudice under which they have groaned. Make them subject to the same laws, grant them the same conditions of life as other men, do not let their faith and their creed form any exception to that great principle of liberty of conscience which is the most precious of the conquest of '89, and you will soon see them rise from their degradation and abandon the false maxims to which they owe the practice of usury —and which have only been their weapon of defence, a retort in kind or, if you prefer it, their revenge on their oppressors. But of course, Monsieur, you can state and argue your views before the Section of the Interior, which will meet to-morrow."

M. Regnault never allowed the auditors to address the Councillors of State on the subjects he gave them to study. The files were sent to him with a detailed analysis, and he distributed them among the councillors, appointing them

reporters to the Section and the full sitting of the Council of State. It was evident that M. Regnault wanted Count Molé to produce a bad impression on the Section and the council by his ambition to address them personally, he being only an auditor.

"I therefore presented myself next morning," he writes, "in an attitude of becoming modesty, and did not utter a word until the President announced that I had been engaged on some very remarkable researches into the condition of the Jews, and added 'that on the means of improving their moral state I had views which seemed to him very lofty,' and although, perhaps, they exceeded the limits which ministers had been careful to impose upon themselves in their reports, he would be delighted if I would communicate them to the Section, who would appreciate them. The trap was too obvious for me to fall into it. I replied that M. Regnault had attached too much importance to a mere talk I had had with him; that far from availing myself of the permission he seemed to be granting me, I should follow the discussion with the closest attention and endeavour to derive profit from it."

Not a single speaker admitted the curse on the Jews and its expiation. All of them adopted M. Regnault's point of view. One of those who struck Count Molé most by his sectarian spirit was a man he had met but a short time before in the Section, and for whom he felt an instinctive aversion.

"I grant him wit," he says, "and especially that kind of wit known as small change. He delivered himself in a humorous sort of way and was very pleased with himself, spoke to the point, and especially with a view to provoking laughter, never failing to set the example himself. His memory was inexhaustible, his store of anecdotes unending; very often it was at the cost of his

own dignity and reputation that he amused his colleagues. He sacrificed himself in his stories to the point of inspiring visible aversion in those uncouth and bitter revolutionaries among his audience who took him for a relic of the *ancien régime*, though he was only a secondary product of the eighteenth century and an ex-member of the Legislative Assembly, which was steeped in the principles of '89. The man in question was M. Beugnot, and as he has come under my pen here, I cannot resist the temptation of giving his portrait.

"Imagine a man about six feet in height, with a huge head, cropped, powdered hair, a wrinkled shining skin and swollen features. His large eyes, which almost came out of their sockets, would have something savage and menacing about them if their restless motion, and his trick of dropping them the moment another gaze is fixed upon him, did not entirely reassure one, with their betrayal of a thoroughly timid or, we may bluntly say, cowardly nature. His short trunk and round shoulders are supported by real stilts, i.e., curiously thin thighs and legs, and his long body has a flexibility and an absence of stiffening and foundation which make him more like a clown than a giant."

In M. Beugnot's speech he represented usury and all the practices of the Jews as the inevitable consequence of the degrading and harsh treatment to which Christian prejudice had subjected them. From time to time M. Regnault glanced at Count Molé; he concluded the sitting after appointing M. Beugnot reporter.

It was in April or May. The Emperor was residing at Saint-Cloud, and called the Council of State together there. The Jewish question was on the Order of Business, and the Emperor called on M. Beugnot.

"Blushing and trembling," Count Molé tells us, "M.

Beugnot began, or rather repeated, the speech he had made to the Section of the Interior, though taking care to be more tactful about what he had called Christian prejudice, and introducing more oratory and rather more zealous—and declamatory—philanthropy in favour of the Jews.

"The Emperor's face was interesting to watch. It was perfectly clear to me straight away that the speaker's was not a mind to his taste, and that he was not a man of whom he had much opinion. Before long a sardonic smile wreathed his lips. When he had finished, he half closed his eyes; seemed to shrug his shoulders and addressed to Beugnot a few jerky remarks which expressed all his scorn for the bold minds which accuse *Christian prejudice*. He affirmed the existence of the curse under the weight of which the Jews are expiating their crime, and announced his intention of putting an end to their usury and 'redeeming' (that was the word he used) the unfortunate landowners of Alsace who had got into their hands.

"Beugnot was dumbfounded, blushed to the roots of his hair and was beginning to stammer something out when Regnault, coming to his assistance, said to the Emperor: 'Sire, I assure you that the reports of your two ministers have been subjected to the most searching examination by your Section of the Interior and its learned reporter. The auditor himself, to whom I referred the matter for enquiry, has at my request made great researches into the condition of the Jews.' 'Who is he?' interrupted Napoleon. 'M. Molé.' 'Is he there?' he said, using his lorgnette to search the window ledges on which the auditors were sitting. I rose the moment his glass found me. 'Have you your work there?' he asked me. 'No, Sire, I have given it to the President of the Section of the Interior.' Turning to M. Regnault he said:

'I want you to give it to Maret, so that he can send it to the "*Moniteur*" to-morrow.'"

At these words Count Molé felt himself "less flattered than embarrassed," but he realized that the Emperor would not stop there so far as he was concerned, and hoped to derive benefit from it for the career he had embraced.

On the following Sunday he went to Saint-Cloud and mingled with the crowd of generals and high officials who made way for the Emperor as he went to mass. Napoleon noticed him and when he returned from mass a chamberlain came to tell Molé to wait after the reception. His Majesty had bidden him call. He waited nearly three-quarters of an hour, and then the same chamberlain came to tell him to come into the gallery.

"The Emperor was by himself. It was the second time I had been alone with him. He was no longer the man who had passed me but a short time before, walking fast, with an escort of foreign princes—and more or less dethroned kings—and, at the tail-end, great French dignitaries or officials, who were out of breath in their efforts to keep up with him. Left face to face, his only thought was to *penetrate* any man he wished to know, and to fascinate or amaze him. Above all, he knew better than any of us have suspected how to vary his phrases, change his appearance, expression and features according to the effect he wanted to produce. To regard him as simply an actor is a totally unjust aspersion, but it is only strict truth to say that this amazing being in no way despised theatricality and that great art of the actor which has proved its power from Roscius to Talma.

"I could see at once that he wanted to put my youth at its ease, and see how far he could make use of it. I wish I could give some idea of the natural simplicity of

his greeting in such a case, his obvious fear lest his presence should intimidate the man he wants to encourage to show himself, or at any rate let himself be seen. He only looked at me occasionally, in what might be called almost sidelong glances, so that I should not feel myself under observation."

"'You have looked into this Jewish business?' he said. 'It is a serious matter. I can't allow all these property owners in Alsace and part of Lorraine to be ruined by money-lenders, and their children with them. It would be an insult to me to tolerate it any longer. I owe the same protection to all Frenchmen, and I cannot regard as Frenchmen these Jews who suck the blood of true Frenchmen. The question of method is, I know, very difficult. The lawyers protest on the ground of the sanctity of engagements voluntarily entered upon, whatever consequences those engagements may involve. But, personally, I look at the practical result alone, and if I do nothing the result will be the ruin of a number of families by rapacious and pitiless money-lenders. The Jewish people, whose history is so curious, presents us with great problems to solve. To what extent can enlightened and Christian governments raise them to some degree from their degraded condition?

"'As you have been engaged in research about them, you must know that most of the mischief can be traced to that indigestible compilation called the "*Talmud*," in which, by the side of their genuine biblical traditions, one finds the most corrupt moral code the moment their relations with Christians are in question.' 'The "*Talmud*," Sire,' I interrupted, 'if I am not mistaken, is unquestionably a diffuse and voluminous collection of commentaries on the fundamental law by doctors or rabbis of all periods,

and though some of them reveal enlightenment and some genuine erudition, a large number have been inspired by hatred of Christianity, and we find the most contemptible refinements on the art of extorting money from others, and enriching oneself from the spoils of everything which is not Jewish.'

"'Yes,' continued the Emperor, 'that's true enough, but how is it that the government which supervises education does not also keep an eye on the Jewish schools? Couldn't we submit their rabbis to an examination, and make sure that they do not teach a moral code which all religions condemn and which brings up their co-religionaries in hatred of Christians—in a word, purify the rabbis, of whom we should, so to speak, make an association and a hierarchy? I do not claim,' he said by way of conclusion, 'to save this race—the only one which seems to have been excepted from redemption—from the curse that rests upon it, but I should like to make it impossible for it to spread the evil which is ravaging Alsace, and for a Jew to have two different moral codes, one for his dealings with his brothers and another for his dealings with Christians.'"

"At this point I took the liberty of replying that this curse to which the Emperor had just referred might well impose a check on his lofty ideas as to the betterment of the Jews, but that in my opinion something could be done and some results obtained. Then he nodded, dismissing me.

"To hear some of his chamberlains and in particular the Grand Master of the Ceremonies, I ought to have retired, walking backwards and varying this curious procedure with numerous deep bows. But, fortunately, hardly had Napoleon nodded before he turned his back on me and darted into his study."

On May 30, 1806, appeared a decree, after submission to the Council of State, which brought assistance to the landed proprietors of Alsace, convened an assembly of Jews, to which questions were to be put as to their moral code, and in which it was announced that it was intended to purify that code by reforms.

The decree was in the following terms :—

At the Palace of Saint-Cloud,
May 30, 1806.

NAPOLEON,

Emperor of the French and King of Italy.

Acting on reports We have received that in several northern departments of Our Empire certain Jews, whose only occupation is that of money-lending, have brought many of the cultivators in these regions to a condition of great distress by the accumulation of most excessive rates of interest ;

We have thought that We owed a duty to come to the help of those of Our subjects whom unrighteous greed has reduced to grievous extremity.

Circumstances have also brought to Our notice how urgent it is to restore among those who profess the Jewish religion in the land submitted to Our obedience that sense of civil morality which unhappily has been deadened in a large number of them by the state of degradation in which they have long languished, a state which We have no intention of maintaining or renewing.

For the accomplishment of this purpose, We have resolved to convoke an assembly of the leading men among the Jews and to communicate to them Our intentions through commissioners whom We shall specially appoint, and who will at the same time ascertain their views as to the means they think best

calculated to restore among their brothers the exercise of useful arts and professions, with a view to letting honest industry replace the shameful practices to which many of them have devoted themselves from father to son for several generations.

For these purposes :

On the report of Our Chief Justice, Minister of Justice and Our Minister of the Interior,

Our Council of State duly heard,

We have decreed and now decree as follows :

Article 1.—For one year, dating from the date of the present decree, all executions on judgments or contracts (other than for purposes of mere preservation) against cultivators or merchants in the departments of the Sarre, the Roër, Mont-Tonnerre, Haut- et Bas-Rhin, Rhin-et-Moselle, the Moselle and the Vosges will be suspended where the titles against these cultivators have been granted by them in favour of Jews.

Article 2.—On July 15 next an assembly of persons professing the Jewish religion and residing in French territory will be held in Our good city of Paris.

Article 3.—The number of members of this assembly will be fixed as in the attached Schedule, drawn from the departments there specified, and selected by the Prefects from rabbis, property owners and other Jews pre-eminent for their probity and learning.

Article 4.—In the other departments of Our Empire not included in the said Schedule, in which more than 100 and less than 500 persons professing the Jewish religion reside, the Prefect will have power to appoint one representative ; for 500 up to 1,000 he will appoint two, and so on in proportion.

ARTICLE 5.—The representatives appointed will come to Paris before July 15 and will intimate their arrival and place of residence to the Secretariat of Our Minister of the Interior, who will inform them of the place, day and hour of the meeting of the assembly.

ARTICLE 6.—Our Minister of the Interior is charged with the execution of this Our decree.

(Signed) NAPOLEON.

SCHEDULE BY DEPARTMENTS OF THE NUMBER OF JEWS TO BE SENT TO THE ASSEMBLY FROM PERSONS PROFESSING THE JEWISH RELIGION, THE CONVOCATION OF WHICH HAS BEEN ORDERED BY HIS MAJESTY.

Name of the Department.	Number of representatives to be sent.	Observations.
Haut-Rhin	12	—
Bas-Rhin	15	—
Mont-Tonnerre	9	—
Rhin-et-Moselle	4	—
Sarre	1	—
Roër	1	—
Moselle	5	—
Meurthe	7	—
Vosges	7	—
Gironde	2	—
Basses-Pyrénées	2	—
Vaucluse	2	—
Côte-d'Or	1	—
Seine	6	—
	74	

Certified correct.

Signed: H. B. MARET,

Minister Secretary of State.

During the following March an Imperial decree made far-reaching changes in the organization of the Council of State by the creation of *Maîtres des Requêtes*.

"In his 'History of the Consulate and the Empire,'" writes Count Molé, "M. Thiers gives a perfectly fantastic explanation of this creation, and assigns for it reasons of which the Emperor never thought. Of the Council of State, and its powers at all periods of its existence, he also makes statements which are no less contrary to the truth. The modern passion for system is one more obstacle to the impartiality of writers. Certainly no one has ever had less claim to that quality than M. Thiers. He is always prejudiced or exaggerating, determined to over- or under-estimate, emotional, impulsive and hasty, and in writing his work he has consulted only witnesses as prejudiced as he is himself. But the really curious point is that before finishing that work, and even as he writes, we have seen him change his views, tendencies and likes and dislikes two or three times."

The Emperor consulted Cambacérès on this institution, and it is very probable that it was the latter who suggested it to him. Certainly Cambacérès had more than once represented to him that there was a substantial gap in the judicial organization, namely, an administrative judiciary, a special tribunal to try possible disputes over contracts between the State and private individuals, and also conflicts between private interests and those of the State.

The *Maîtres des Requêtes* were created to constitute this tribunal. They formed what was called the "*Comité des Contentieux*," under the presidency of the Chief Justice. At first they were six in number. Count Molé, appointed a *Maître des Requêtes* by decree of June 11, 1806, was among them. The other five

were Messrs. Portalis, Pasquier, Janet, Chadelas and Fréville.

"M. Thiers," writes Count Molé, "states that we were all very young, and bore names recalling former or recent services to France. The truth is that I was very young indeed (twenty-five). M. Pasquier, aged forty, had been a Councillor in the *Parlement* of Paris, so that his appointment was no undue promotion. Portalis was but a few years younger than he. Chadelas was an ex-review inspector of whom no one knew anything, but for all that an honest man and eminently fitted to consider the contracts made by the Minister of War. Janet was a little advocate from the Jura, a quarrelsome, artful man, a tireless talker in a verbose and tedious sort of way, who had made a large fortune out of the property of *émigrés* in his province. The Baron de Fréville, a man of affected and pretentious mind who aimed at elegance, was a flatterer, but also the soul of honesty. In his case the interior was better than the exterior. His end proved it, for his last years were spent in the most fervent Christian devotion. He gave a large part of his income to the poor, and I am almost giving away a secret in saying so here."

When the new *Maîtres des Requêtes* had taken the oath, the Chief Justice, Régnier, Duc de Massa, called them together to draw up a scheme of work. The meetings were held once a week. A fixed number of auditors was attached to the commission which prepared and completed the files, but the Chief Justice sometimes gave the most important pieces of business straight to the *Maîtres des Requêtes* for them to report upon. The latter had a consultative voice at the general sittings of the Council of State; they were allowed to speak but their votes were only reckoned on matters they themselves brought forward. This was a rare occurrence. Their functions

as *Maîtres des Requêtes* did not prevent them from attending the sittings and taking part in the work of the Section to which they had previously been attached. Their powers and functions were gradually extended and the Emperor gave them special tasks, sometimes very important ones.

The first question which came up was that of the Jews, to which reference has just been made.

A decree dated from Saint-Cloud on July 22, 1806, established a commission of three members, with the task of carrying out the decree of May 30. The commissioners appointed were Pasquier, Portalis and Molé.

"Public opinion," writes the latter, "or at any rate such public opinion as could make itself heard, was so completely in the dark on the subject of Napoleon's intentions and the mission he gave us that I am obliged to enter into certain details here. It seems to me unnecessary to set down here every article of the decrees which defined the duties we were intended to perform in the two assemblies which were about to meet. The three commissioners appointed were myself (president), M. Portalis and M. Pasquier.

"Of the two assemblies the first, civil and political, was wholly composed of French Jews, and was to examine the causes which had brought about the evil doings of their co-religionaries in Alsace, and to trace in the past the source of the counsel, or rather command, given to the Jews in the name of their religion to carry on money-lending with the Christians and rob them of their property by subterranean manœuvres. The committee was also to suggest measures which in its opinion would be most suitable, not only to put an end to the mischief, but to correct notions so false and abhorrent to the moral code and laws of all nations.

"The second assembly, to be known as the Great Sanhedrin, and constituted exclusively of rabbis summoned from all points of the globe, was to extract from the '*Talmud*' everything relating to usury, and to purify that tedious and unwieldy compilation, or rather substitute for it a code of precepts and decisions to be formulated by this assembly which would become the law which Jews must obey, or suffer penalties which it was also to prescribe. At the same time, the rabbis of France were to receive an hierarchical organization from the Imperial Government: they must report any breach of the new law to the Prefect in cases in which he had been unable to prevent it with the help of their advice and influence. The rabbis would be paid by the State; the State would appoint them: it would impose certain tests upon them, and in particular reserve the right to supervise Jewish schools and the education of the young carried on by them.

"The three commissioners were to have the duty of opening the two assemblies in person and then supervising their labours—semi-officially rather than officially—and when the assemblies had concluded their task the commissioners were to place the results before the Emperor in a report which was to end with proposals, in the form of a decree, for all the measures they should consider most suitable and most likely to attain the object the Emperor had in mind.

"However, my object in writing these recollections is not to give a history, nor even *mémoires* of this period; and I have enlarged and shall continue to enlarge on this Jewish affair only for the purpose of revealing Napoleon's views, views which were less fantastic than has been generally believed; on the contrary they were always political, and always governed by a desire to bring back

into the path of order* everything which strayed from it. In the notes or the annexe to this document will be found the instructions† which he dictated and had sent to me through his Minister of the Interior, M. de Champagny, along with the questions we were to put before the assembly of Jews.

" At our suggestion this assembly appointed a committee of nine selected members to help us in drawing up its programme. It chose as its president M. Furtado, who was in the category known as Portuguese Jews. He came from Bordeaux and combined a fine face and splendid manners with a cultured mind. He was infinitely more familiar with the writers of the eighteenth century than with the '*Talmud*,' and sought truth far more in Voltaire than in any other writer, Jewish or Christian. I may remark incidentally that this assembly brought together a large number of very distinguished men, some of them even honest and honourable Jews. Among them, too, were several rabbis, some of whom were men of intellect and knowledge. I made myself entirely accessible to them and found their conversation as instructive as it was interesting.

" What I told the Emperor of these rabbis only confirmed him in his idea of influencing them, and giving them an

* "This word 'order,' used unsystematically and without qualification, is vague. Everyone uses it to designate the political or social system that appeals to him. To Napoleon 'order' meant the harmony of details and the way they fitted into the organization of the great whole. Given that 'whole,' the relations between things and persons must be worked out in such a way that the ensemble, far from encountering no obstacle or resistance anywhere, can return in the shape of protection to each detail, entity and interest everything it receives from them itself in the way of energy, impetus and vitality. Order in this sense can be found in theory in every form of government, whether unitary monarchy or mixed monarchy, with powers which balance and check one another. Also in the Republican form. The fitness, the adaptability of these various forms of government to the manners, traditions and character of a nation must be judged by the possibility or impossibility of introducing this form of order, the first essential of which is permanence." (Count Molé's note.)

† These notes have disappeared, and also the instructions to which Count Molé refers.

hierarchical organization, and he convoked the Grand Sanhedrin without delay. From all points of the globe, Judea included, these interpreters of the Law of Moses were invited to come to Paris to form an assembly which might have an unchallenged authority over the scattered remnant of the Hebrew race. I am very anxious that my readers should know the questions and instructions which were all dictated by Napoleon himself. If I am not mistaken, they will prove that in raising the moral condition of the Jews and preparing them for the enjoyment of civil and political rights, his object was to do for them exactly the reverse of what was done for the Protestants by the revocation of the Edict of Nantes.

"He wished to attract this scattered race—concealing their ill-gotten gains in every quarter of the earth—to France, and he offered them the protection of our laws on no other terms than that they should abandon scandalous commercial practices, and particularly usury, in their dealings with Christians. In this, as in every other matter, Napoleon was simply the politician. I cannot say whether or not he really believed in that hopeless damnation of the Jewish people which our sacred writings teach, but this I know—that he was extremely careful in this matter to do and say nothing which could wound the most secret and delicate susceptibilities of the true believers, a precaution which once more must be attributed solely to his policy.

"The lay assembly, if I may use the word, returned eminently satisfactory answers to Napoleon's twelve questions. Its composition had not left me in doubt for a moment as to this result. Our task now was to give these answers an authority which could not be challenged, to convert them into doctrinal decisions, emanating from conference between the doctors of law, and to make it

impossible for any rabbi to venture to attack or dispute them. We had already secured one result—that an assembly comprising the élite of the Jews in France, had publicly and without reserve or qualification denounced and condemned the shameful customs and criminal practices to which the Government had called its attention, and which had aroused the wrathful protests of so many Frenchmen. During the inevitable interval while the representatives for the Grand Sanhedrin were arriving from all corners of the earth, the commissioners occasionally worked with a committee of nine members chosen from the assembly, and which was formed at our suggestion.

"In this committee the only difficulty we had to cope with was the excessive ease with which it dragged the customs and even the creed of its co-religionaries into all the most difficult questions. I must say emphatically that it was not a case of the head drawing the body. The rich and cultured Jews had nothing Jewish left about them except the name, a name they made it a point of honour to keep and answer to; they were really Frenchmen of Jewish origin, and most of them were eighteenth-century philosophers. Not the least of our difficulties was to make them work harmoniously with the true Jews, particularly the rabbis, who mistrusted them and suspected them of a desire to betray them.

"May I be pardoned for one more passing reference to myself. Undoubtedly the intrinsic worth of a man is always the same, whether he is in the front rank or the second, but there are some natures which never have their full scope and show their full capacity save in the first, and desire no more. I do not mean, of course, the very front rank, but simply the highest where there are several. I have always thought that without being above the level of many others, or even up to their level, I had greater

aptitudes for leading than following, for directing than participating or assisting. Napoleon always seemed to have the same idea of me. Of the three commissioners, he had set me in the way of assuming the leadership. Without actually appointing me president of the commission of three he had made me its representative, and always communicated with it through me. I had understood without asking any explanation. Of my two colleagues one, Portalis, consoled himself by attributing to my name the favour of which I seemed to be the object; the other, a very ambitious man with a good opinion of himself, waited uncomplainingly for a chance of making himself known to the master, and already saw himself a Councillor of State.

"Two distinguished individuals to a certain extent took umbrage at my position, the President of the Section of the Interior and the Minister of that department. When the assembly had completed its work, I thought I ought to render an account of it to the Emperor in a report, at the end of which, in the name of the commission, I suggested to him the convocation of the Grand Sanhedrin, and outlined a programme of the task it should take in hand. I had no claim to deal direct with the Emperor, and I should also have taken a false step in asking him for a private audience. Fortunately I discovered the mistake I was about to make in time, and I burnt my report. All three of us presented a report of our work, with the suggestions which were the outcome of it, to the Minister of the Interior for him to lay before the Emperor.

"But Napoleon had already left this matter on one side. One of the great defects to be found in this amazing man is his lack of perseverance. His first impressions were too vivid and exaggerated, and almost always brought reaction, I might even say disillusionment, in their train.

He discovered that the matter into which he had thrown himself so enthusiastically could not bring him the profits and honour he had expected of it. In this Jewish affair he had produced his effects and made his appeal to the Jews all over the world. Three-fourths of his object had been attained, and the rest, the practical part, he left to his commissioners, the Council of State and his Minister, reserving to himself the right to correct and disavow them if they strayed from the path he had pointed out.

"Besides, in the instructions he had dictated (and which should be read) he had informed the two assemblies, as well as his three commissioners, of the nature of their task in such precise and formal terms that there was really nothing for them to do but to clothe the ideas or arrangements he had indicated in certain forms."

In a word, the nine declarations of the Grand Sanhedrin were reduced to writing and copied out on instructions which anyone can read. It was the same with the draft decree regulating Jewish trade and business, and imposing on the Jews, in their transactions with Christians, conditions which for the future protected them from the monstrous usury and scandalous commercial practices from which they had suffered so much.

CHAPTER VI

Count Molé appointed Prefect of the Côte d'Or.—He publishes a new edition of his "Moral and Political Essays."—He is made a Councillor of State and leaves Dijon.—He is appointed Director General of Roads and Bridges and made an Officer of the Legion of Honour.—The Malet conspiracy.

CHAPTER VI

COUNT MOLÉ was attached for nearly two years to the Council of State, and he made good use of the time to familiarize himself with public affairs and administration. But Napoleon had his own ideas about him and wanted him to be nearer the heart of things, so he appointed him Prefect of the Côte-d'Or by decree of November 10, 1807.* Count Molé was appointed at one stroke to be head of one of the most important departments in which he had a chance of showing his talent for administration.

It was on December 6, 1807, that he was formally installed as Prefect. For this kind of administrative solemnity Napoleon had ordered a special ceremony, to which all the members of the Prefectural Council, the mayors and deputies of the town, and the principal magistrates had to be summoned. It looks as if M. Molé had gone to take up his post with a certain air of independence and disregard of the imperial regulations.

Councillors, mayors and magistrates were ignored, and this caused some slight agitation at the Ministry of the Interior and brought down upon him the strictures of the Minister, Crétet, who probably wanted to cover himself against his master's wrath. These observations ruffled M. Molé, and no doubt he sent a letter of protest, judging by the following letter from the General Secretary, de Guérande,† replying in the name of the Minister :

I hasten, sir, to reply to your letter of January 26. I greatly regret that the expressions I used in the letter

* In the National Archives.
† National Archives; letter of February 1, 1808, of the Minister.

I wrote to you on the subject of your installation have displeased you. My observations did not apply to you, as when you arrived the authority had not reached you. It was not your part to prescribe the ceremonial of the act by which your office is formally entered upon. In reminding you of the formalities to be observed in such cases, I desired to carry out the intentions which the Emperor has so often expressed. They should not be unknown to the Prefect of the Côte-d'Or, as His Majesty, on the occasion of the installation of the present mayor of Dijon, charged me particularly to inform your predecessor of them.

Accept my assurance, sir, that far from being disposed to suspect you of some error, I shall always be only too ready to acknowledge your judgment and your zeal for the service of His Majesty. It may happen occasionally that, with all his knowledge and discretion, an administrator may depart on some points from the formalities decreed by the laws or sanctified by custom. It is my duty to remind them of these things, but my observations are not criticisms, and I am perfectly certain that I shall never have occasion to trouble you with them. . . .

Count Molé had been appointed to Dijon in the place of a certain Sieur Riouffe, an ex-revolutionary, who was disliked by Napoleon. Riouffe was appointed to Poictiers, a change which he considered a slight and refused it, asking for another post, which was not granted.

In a department of this importance the administration of Count Molé showed itself to be firm and without the defects which had marked that of his predecessor. He also brought a certain renown to the Prefecture of the Côte-d'Or, where the former society of Dijon had shone

before the Revolution. With the help of Madame Molé, who had followed him, he opened a *salon*, and his private or official receptions left memories which survived his departure for a very long time. M. Joubert, whose friendship went everywhere with M. Molé, in one of his letters jokingly refers to this *salon* as the "Court of Dijon," the Court of the new Duke of Burgundy.

During his period of residence in Dijon Count Molé had occasion to render d'Hendhal a service of which the latter expressed his appreciation in several of his letters. In the course of certain excavations he was carrying out in the neighbourhood of Rome he had found a bust of Tiberius.* He wanted to leave this bust to M. Molé, whom he calls M. Dijon, by his will.

"That would perhaps be the moment," he writes long afterwards, "to offer him the Tiberius which I am itching to give him. I am really glad that in the cruel Emperor I have found a means of expressing my gratitude, though not of discharging my debt. People come to my house three or four times a month to see the fine eyes of Tiberius. One thing is regarded as unique, and interests all the savants who have usually no sense of beauty; there are indications of budding moustaches and whiskers."

Count Molé employed such leisure as the administration of his department left him to prepare a new edition of his "Moral and Political Essays," which appeared in 1809. He added to it a life of Mathieu Molé, originally intended to form part of a historical work he had been meditating, but abandoned, and he now separated this part.

"As a matter of fact," he writes,† "Mathieu Molé's life presents few facts which are not known. In 1793 its author witnessed the burning of the family papers in

* It is preserved in the Château de Champlâtreux.

† "Life of Mathieu Molé," by Count Molé. Preface.

which he would have found much valuable family material. Several of them contained whole speeches and letters of the First President, Keeper of the Seals. . . ."

Absorbed as he was in public affairs, Count Molé had renounced literary pursuits, but he felt under a duty to honour the memory of his grandfather, as if he wished to put himself under the ægis of his great ancestor on his entry into public life. "Just as the ancients, when embarking on a long voyage," he says, "never failed to offer a sacrifice to the gods, the author, on entering his new career, has desired to offer this tribute to the virtues which should guide his steps."*

But the "Life of Mathieu Molé" was more than a tribute of homage to his ancestor; it was also an act of filial piety, a kind of invocation to his martyred father, a pledge to him to continue the age-long traditions which had been the glory and honour of his house.

"Here," he says at the end of this work, "O great man, I conclude your praises with your life! How eagerly have I gathered together the smallest details of your story! Perhaps, alas, I have known you better than that son of yours to whom I owe life. For do not fear, my father, that I am forgetting you when my feeble hands are endeavouring to raise this monument to the honour of our name. I have the right to reveal the unknown beauty of your life. You were the justest of the just, and in taking you as its victim crime showed itself just to you! If, from the land where you sojourn, your gaze still dwells upon earth, may it rest upon a son worthy of you. May your eyes sustain him throughout his career, and when he reaches the end may they see him honourably return the name you gave him!"

* * *

* "Life of Mathieu Molé."

The Prefecture of the Côte-d'Or was destined to be only an interlude for Count Molé, a step towards more important functions. He was recalled to Paris from the Tuileries by a decree, dated February 19, 1809,* which appointed him Councillor of State in the Section of the Interior, and a few months later he was made Director-General of Roads and Bridges by a decree dated from the imperial camp of Fontainebleau on October 2, 1809†; meanwhile he had received the title of Count, by letters patent signed at Schönbrunn on September 29, 1809.

Three years after his entry into public life Count Molé thus found himself called to take charge of one of the most important departments in the Empire.

The decline of his fortunes was at hand, but Napoleon, then at the apogee of his reign, had reached a period of realization, and in his eagerness to add another lustre to the lustre of his arms was thinking of carrying out vast schemes for improving communications, plans of great works and buildings with a view to developing the country's commercial, agricultural and industrial resources. To a young man of twenty-eight he now entrusted the task of understanding him, keeping him informed and carrying out his vast ideas. In all this he was giving the most complete proof of his high opinion of Molé's powers of assimilation and work.

His new post brought Count Molé into almost daily touch with Napoleon. The latter liked his company, enjoyed talking to him, often took him with him when he was moving about, and when circumstances prevented him from having Molé with him he ordered him to write, "so that the talk could continue."

Molé was also received by the Empress Josephine. "I

* National archives.

† Id.

was calling at Malmaison one day," he writes.* "The Empress told me that the Emperor had wanted to have an anatomy lesson: he told Corvisart secretly to bring him parts of the human body to dissect them in his presence. For this purpose he shut himself up in his study with Corvisart before lunch. The Empress knew nothing, but she noticed that the Emperor was paler than usual and could not eat. She asked the butler, who first pledged her to secrecy and then told her of the anatomy lesson. She immediately sent for Corvisart and told him of the Emperor's condition. Corvisart refused to go on with the dissection. 'And the Emperor,' added the Empress, 'subsequently thanked me.'"

In his capacity as Director of Roads and Bridges, Count Molé had to travel in Belgium, the Scheldt country and Holland. In 1811 he accompanied Napoleon when he went to Antwerp to visit the new docks, the plans for the construction of which Count Molé had adopted, and which were now being carried out. In this city he presided at a mixed conference of military and civil engineers at which the question of the defence of the Scheldt was discussed and settled.

Antwerp, the "loaded pistol at the heart of England," was one of Napoleon's most precious conquests. His struggle against Europe was only one form of his struggle against England, and the port of Antwerp, enlarged and fortified, was in his eyes the indispensable base from which, when the right moment came, he could deal the power of England a mortal blow. He was very pleased with Count Molé for the industry he displayed in grasping his views and hastening their realization. He demonstrated his satisfaction by making him an Officer of the Legion of Honour on June 30, 1811.

As Director of Roads and Bridges M. Molé had also to

* September 29, 1809. (Count Molé's manuscript diary.)

turn his attention to important constructional works, among them—as we shall see subsequently—the bridges of Bordeaux, Saint-André de Cubzac on the Dordogne, and the Grotto des Échelles.

At nine o'clock in the morning of October 23, 1812* Count Molé was working at his table when his secretary came in, trembling violently.

"I've just heard terrible news," he said.

"What ever is it?"

"I daren't tell you."

"Tell me, quick, you're alarming me."

"The Emperor has been assassinated in Moscow."

"It isn't true. Who told you?"

"One of your officials who was passing the Ministry of Justice; a regiment was drawn up and groups of people were wringing their hands and asking what is going to happen. The Minister came out and the official saw him jump into his carriage."

At first Count Molé did not credit the truth of this report, but on reflection he decided that if the Minister had himself given the alarm by having his troops got under arms and allowing a crowd to collect at his gate and spread the rumour of the Emperor's assassination, there could be no doubt. He immediately considered the incalculable consequences of his death, Europe a prey to fresh convulsions, the development and end of which no man could tell, the revolution beginning again, France separated from her army by hundred of leagues and succumbing under the hatred of so many nations which envied or had been humiliated by her. The second thought that came to him was to go and offer his services to the High Chancellor, convinced as he was that the latter would immediately proclaim the King of Rome.

* The Lahorie-Malet conspiracy. (Count Molé's diary.)

He " has his horses put in " and goes off at a somewhat reckless pace, wearing the uniform of a Councillor of State. In the Rue Saint-Dominique he meets (Laborde)* and takes him in his carriage. Imagine his astonishment on hearing him say that he had just left the High Chancellor, that that very night excellent news of the Emperor had been received, but that General Malet, who had been confined in an asylum, had escaped, gone to Versailles, brought back the 10th Cohort of the National Guards and read them a proclamation in which he announced the Emperor's death, the re-birth of liberty, and an alleged *senatus-consultus* decreeing the organization of a provisional government. Then Malet had gone with the 10th Cohort to La Force prison, released his accomplices, Generals Lahorie and Guidal, and from thence to the house of General Hulin, commanding the fortress of Paris, and shot him through the head. Lahorie, for his share, had been to arrest the Minister of Police and taken him to La Force as well as Desmarets, his divisional general. Other conspirators had been to carry off the Prefect of Police in the same way.

The High Chancellor confirmed all these details. With the most perfect composure he sent guards to the houses of all highly-placed persons, but for his own door he kept only his usual pensioner.

Count Molé found the High Chancellor in conference with the Minister of the Interior, the Grand Chancellor of the Legion of Honour and the Deputy of the Minister of Police, M. Réal, who arrived at the same moment as himself; M. Réal had learned what was happening in a very curious way. At half-past seven in the morning a servant sent out by him, who had doubtless forgotten his commission, asked the High Chancellor if there was anv

* Illegible in the manuscript.

news. The High Chancellor, slightly surprised at such a silly message, replied that he had heard no news and M. Réal could have found out for himself if he was so anxious for some.

Réal came in soon after his messenger and the explanation was short and simple. On his report the High Chancellor issued an order to the Minister of War to get the Imperial Guard under arms and double the sentries at Saint-Cloud, and to Marshal Moncey to arm the *gendarmerie* and bring the brigades from the adjoining departments to Paris. Five hundred men were sent to La Force to release the Minister, the Prefect of Police and Desmarets; Malet, Lahorie and Guidal had been arrested by the time Count Molé left the High Chancellor.

As Molé was leaving, one of his friends stopped his carriage: he had come to find out if he had been arrested, and offered him shelter.

"Don't make any mistake," said Count Molé, "if there's to be another revolution, let us stand up against it; no emigration and no hiding."

He then drove to General Hulin's house in the Place Vendôme. Part of the Paris Guard was drawn up in the square and the scattered groups around seemed alarmed rather than excited. Count Molé did not go into the General's house, as he was told at the door that he was in bed and his life was in danger.

"I next went to the Prefecture of Police," Count Molé continues; "I saw a crowd at the door; they looked evilly-disposed and on the faces of many I could see a sort of ominous sneer which seemed aroused by the liveries of my servants and the arms of my carriage. What I had before me was a perfect picture of the Revolution. I found Pasquier, who had just arrived, greeted him, overwhelmed him with questions, and this is more or less what he told me.

" At seven o'clock in the morning he had been aroused by a terrible din which increased in volume as it approached the door of his room. One of his servants had come to tell him that the Emperor was dead and that certain people were on their way to arrest him (Pasquier) by order of the Senate. Seeing that his door was on the point of being broken in, and never suspecting that the news was false, he had rushed down a secret staircase to the garden gate; but as he found it closed, the conspirators, who had followed him, besieged him in the staircase and finally caught him. They treated him fairly well, allowed him to dress, and permitted his wife, sister and brother-in-law to remain with him for the three-quarters of an hour he was under arrest.

" Pasquier then asked to see the order on the strength of which he was arrested. They showed him an alleged *senatus-consultus* comprising a rather large number of articles. Pasquier glanced through it, and a short time after he asked for it again and this time kept it long enough to read it at leisure. The alleged *senatus-consultus* was signed by a certain number of senators who were known for their republican opinions, and hostility towards the Government.

" Among them were Siéyès, Garat, Destutt de Tracy and Lanjuinais; the suppression of indirect taxes, conscription and the National Guard were announced. The Grand Cordon and Cross of the Legion of Honour were also suppressed, the ribbon only being retained until a colour fit to be consecrated to Liberty was found. Executive power was provisionally confided to a committee composed of Siéyès, Moreau and Carnot. A larger committee was appointed to draw up a draft constitution; its more important members were Garat, Destutt de Tracy, Lanjuinais, Mathieu de Montmorency, Alexis de

JOSEPHINE.

Noailles, Frochot, etc. M. de Pommereul was Military Commandant of Paris, Lahorie Minister of Police, and Malet Minister of War ; and all the Ministers and Directors-General were to resign and hand in their portfolios to their Secretaries-General. The *senatus-consultus* was accompanied by a proclamation in which the re-birth of liberty and the end of tyranny were announced and peace was promised. A promise was made to the Pope that he should return to Rome and he was invited to Paris to receive homage as an act of expiation. The officer in charge of the cohort, who remained with Pasquier the whole time, pointed out that he had already taken off his cross and was only keeping his ribbon.

" After three-quarters of an hour Pasquier was removed to La Force. On arriving he learned that the Duc de Rovigo had been brought there secretly, and a moment later he saw Desmarets also brought in. At half-past nine the scene had changed. Pasquier witnessed the arrival of five hundred men of the Imperial Guard who had come to set him free, as well as the Minister and Desmarets, but when he went back home he found his own guard, who refused to admit him.

" A line of soldiers drawn up at the foot of the stairs refused to let him go up. He called the officer in charge, who stepped forward and told him proudly that he was no longer Prefect of Police and he did not know him. Pasquier insisted. A sergeant said they would have to kill the man. The officer gave a signal and the soldiers followed the Prefect, who withdrew with a bayonet wound in his side. His valet tried to jump in front of him and received two bayonet cuts on the wrist. At the end of the passage leading to the Prefecture Pasquier wanted to go by the quay on the right, but was met by a platoon of the same guard, who levelled their rifles at him.

Ultimately he went into a chemist's where he remained until Laborde came to deliver him.

" Pasquier seemed to me very calm for a man who had just had such a warm time. Apparently he had judged his position with the greatest accuracy, as while he was under arrest he had said to his brother-in-law : ' This is a *coup de main*, and in six hours we shall either be dead or have those who have arrested us in our power.'

" He told me how the Prefect of Police had been arrested. Lahorie had gone to his house with a large section of the cohort. The Minister was in bed. Hearing the doors of his rooms (which no one was willing to open) being broken through, he had rushed out in his night-gown towards the noise, and thus been captured. As he had attempted to resist he had been handled pretty roughly, and it was even said that an order had been given that he was to be killed, but that Lahorie, whose life he had once saved, had returned the service in kind.

" When they reached the Pont Neuf he got out of the carriage in which he had been placed and tried to escape, but was recaptured and dragged rather than led to the gates of the prison.

" He asked an officer of the cohort if he did not realize that it was one of the Emperor's ministers on whom he had had the effrontery to lay hands. The man replied : ' Yes, I know, and I also know that there's no Emperor now and you've got to come with us.'

" As I was leaving Pasquier someone came to tell him that the coaches were being stopped at the barriers by order of the conspirators. The Chief of the Fire Brigade also came to tell him in my presence how he had heard of the plot at six o'clock in the morning. As some officers of the cohort were passing the firemen's barracks he had heard them say : ' Those fellows are still soldiers of the

Emperor, but we'll soon shut up that show and teach them that there's no Emperor now, and no King of Rome either.'

"I spent the rest of my day gathering information about this incredible plot. Two hours later Paris was in an uproar and no one could say what would have happened. The lack of energy displayed by the conspirators, and particularly the lethargy of Lahorie and the presence of mind of Laborde, the Deputy Commandant, had brought the whole scheme to nought. Lahorie was to have taken the Duc de Rovigo to La Force while Guidal simultaneously arrested the High Chancellor and the Minister of War. Then the whole action of the Government had been paralysed: there was no authority capable of issuing an order which might have rallied the forces of the plotters. Instead of issuing one, Lahorie played at being a Minister. He took the Duc de Rovigo's carriage to go heaven knows where: he sent for the house staff, promised to keep them if they were satisfied, and asked for the Minister's tailor to get his uniform made.

"Meanwhile time was passing and Guidal, instead of arresting the High Chancellor and the Minister of War, was taking the Duc de Rovigo to La Force. Suspecting that the plot had failed and in the greatest alarm because the populace had taken no part and no interest in what was happening, Guidal disappeared after lodging his prisoner in gaol. Malet for his part, on meeting Laborde, told him that he was under his orders and that he, Malet, was Minister of War.

"Laborde, with wonderful presence of mind, duly offered his services and asked him to come to the General Staff building to give his instructions in greater detail. Malet went in, the door closed upon him and Laborde had him arrested. Laborde then went to the Ministry

and arrested Lahorie, whom he found in the act of signing orders for various arrests which were lying on his table. Next he went to the Prefecture of Police and was arrested in turn by the guard, which then made an attempt on the life of the Prefect of Police. By sheer vehemence and eloquence Laborde won over this force, which was accustomed to obedience to his orders; the men let him go, and an hour later the same Laborde returned and made them lay down their arms and hand over the Prefect of Police.

"In the evening I went back to M. Pasquier and remained there until eleven o'clock. He showed me the report he was making to the Emperor on the events of the day. It was straightforward, precise and truthful, but it did not give much detail and lacked colour; he did not give the police sufficient praise and offered few comments and even fewer conjectures on the origin of the conspiracy, its object and what would have happened had it succeeded. It was the report which any man not too well informed would have made.

"L——(?)* came and was interesting on the subject of the conspirators with whom he had served in the Army of the Rhine. Guidal had always seemed to him less than a mediocrity and Malet a madman, though stubborn whenever he was set on anything. Lahorie, however, he had liked, and he described him as one of the most remarkable men he had ever known. Pasquier told us that he had seen him at the Minister of Police's house in the morning and that he seemed very dejected. When he saw Pasquier he raised his head and said: 'I hope no harm has come to you, anyhow.'

"It is said, but I have not been able to ascertain the truth, that when he appeared before the Minister of Police

* Illegible in the manuscript.

he said : ' I saved your life this morning, so we are quits.' However the High Chancellor called the Ministers together twice during the day and all the measures to be taken were decided upon. The affair is now in the hands of a military committee with General Dijean as its president and it will try the miscreants.

" The next day, the twenty-fourth, I dined at the High Chancellor's house with Réal : he had spent the whole night examining the three Generals. He told us that Malet boldly affirmed that the Emperor's death had been announced and that the *senatus-consultus* was authentic. When he was asked for the official minute he replied that he had lost it. Lahorie was prostrate : he protested that he had known nothing until the time he had been released and he had then thought it his duty to obey an order of the Senate. Guidal defended himself with much presence of mind but Réal told us nothing very striking about his cross-examination."

CHAPTER VII

Count Molé is made Chief Judge, Minister of Justice.—The manuscript called " The Hundred Days."—The reasons which inspired him to write it.—Conversations with the Emperor in 1813.—Napoleon's physical strength wanes.—The Emperor's aims.—Napoleon and the savants.—The Emperor's remark about the right age for war-making.—The Roads and Bridges Councils.—The *petites entrées*.—Napoleon's anger with the English Press.—The causes of his ruin.—Violent scene between the King of Holland and the Emperor.—Napoleon contemplates setting up a Regency Council.—Review of recruits in the Place de Carrousel.—Count Molé's reflections on Napoleon's career.—The weak sides of Napoleon's genius.—Change in the circumstances of the struggle against Europe.—The Emperor talks about the future.—The voluntary gifts.—The Regency Council.—Meeting of the Privy Council.—Napoleon superstitious.—Gaps made by death among those around him.—Conversation with Napoleon on June 13, 1813.—Pastoret.—Napoleon's opinion of the Empress Marie Louise, Eugène de Beauharnais and Murat.—The Emperor's self-control.—The Emperor has killed all initiative.—Berthier's letter on this subject.—The nobility.—The men of the Revolution.—The Emperor again talks of a Regency.—Allusion to Talleyrand.

CHAPTER VII

COUNT MOLÉ, who had been appointed Commander of the Imperial Order of the Reunion by decree of April 11, 1813, remained in charge of the Department of Roads and Bridges until the middle of that year. About this time the Duc de Massa, Chief Judge, whose health no longer allowed him to carry on his high duties, was given leave of absence for three weeks by a decree of June 13, 1813, which simultaneously appointed Count Molé to take charge of the Ministry of Justice for the duration of this leave.*

The three weeks' leave ran into several months and on November 20, 1813† a decree dated from the Tuileries definitively appointed Count Molé Chief Judge, Minister of Justice.

It was during this year, 1813, that he had most opportunities of being with Napoleon and having a large number of conversations. Desiring to preserve them in some permanent form, he broke off his work on his memoirs, which had not yet reached 1813, and recorded these interviews in a manuscript entitled "The Hundred Days." We think we should reproduce it here,‡ although certain passages of it anticipate that point in Count Molé's life at which we have arrived.§

"I feel a sense of bitter discouragement seize hold of me," he writes, "when I think of these memoirs, the history of my life, the composition of which was a charm

* National archives.

† Id.

‡ Monsieur Gustave Bord published certain fragments of this manuscript in the "*Revue de la Révolution*," January to April issues, 1888. We give complete text here.

§ The manuscript is preserved in the Château de Champlâtreux.

to my youth and more than once a consolation to my riper years. They will never be finished—my age to-day forbids me to hope for *that*—but I should at any rate like to use the moments assigned to me to record on paper my recollections of an epoch, an epoch distorted by writers who are doubtless highly talented and well intentioned, but less concerned with the accuracy of the story than what they can get out of it to support their own views and hopes."*

"I will return to the beginning of 1813 and certain conversations I then had with Napoleon, conversations which will give some idea of my relations with him and enable the reader accurately to judge of the frame of mind in which he found me on March 20, 1815, and that in which he himself approached me.

"He was then making preparations to repair the Moscow disaster and displaying a furious activity which perhaps surpassed everything he had revealed hitherto. It had been observed during his campaign of 1812 that physically Napoleon was not the same man, and mentally was adversely affected by this. Two of his aides-de-camp, particularly M. Daru, told me that comparing him with himself, and remembering what they had seen of him in other campaigns, they could not resist the conviction that even now his declining health, strength and physical constitution must inevitably compel him to cease denying the impossible and proving that to him there was no such thing. Speaking personally, I can say definitely that he has given me—perhaps more than any other soul—the right

* The passage omitted here is reproduced in Chapter IX so that chronological order can be preserved as far as possible.

and the opportunity of seeing into the recesses of his vast intellect, and I never observed there the slightest indication of any determination to build an imperishable edifice.

"It seems to me that he has never had any other aim but to acquire, during his brilliant and meteoric career on earth, more glory, greatness and power than any man has won since Alexander the Great. From his own lips I soon received confirmation of M. Daru's remarks.

"One evening in January, 1813, at one of those *petites entrées* which he was almost always giving me, I was in the Empress's drawing-room. As I went in, I noticed the three individuals whom the etiquette of their rank had brought together to have an alleged game of whist with this Princess, and in addition the Emperor, who was surrounded by Berthollet, Monge, Laplace and Lagrange, and talking vivaciously. The two former had been with the expedition to Egypt, and I was struck by their apparently violent efforts to control themselves as they listened to Napoleon. He was warmly, and I might even say eloquently, maintaining the authenticity of Genesis against these two famous savants who had no doubt cast some doubts on its genuineness before I went in.

"With a most marvellous fidelity of detail the Emperor was reminding them of the smallest rock and undulation of the ground in the valley* . . . where the Rock of Hebron is, which Moses struck with his rod and produced the spring from which the Israelites drank."

"'Don't you remember,' he said, 'how I walked through the valley with Genesis in my hand and was astounded to confirm the perfect accuracy of the Hebrew book.'"

* This gap is in the manuscript.

"The warmer the Emperor became the greater was the alarm of his adversaries. Laplace, perhaps the most incredulous of all, went to the help of his friends, of course, without dropping the courtier's flattering manner which was habitual with him. While showering extravagant praise on the Emperor's miraculous memory he tried to show that the sacred text contradicted itself. The battle soon ceased for want of combatants: the Emperor saw me, left the group, and led me away to the billiard-room, which was always open on these family evenings."

"'These savants,' he said, 'always amuse me by their intense anxiety to run down what we call the sacred books, and throw doubt on their authenticity. You know that Monge and Berthollet were with me in Egypt; they saw what I saw; everything you heard me telling them just now is literal truth. I constantly read Genesis when visiting the places it describes and was amazed beyond measure to see that they were still exactly as Moses has described them.'"

"Even as he was walking and talking, the Emperor showed signs of fatigue: he stopped, and leaning against the billiard table pushed the balls about with his hand, and seemed about to drop off to sleep. He saw that I had noticed.

"'It's curious,' he said, 'how one's constitution changes as one gets older, without any decline of strength or deterioration of health. Our capacities change and our plans are bound to feel the effect. In other days I used to say to Montesquieu* several times a day: "Montesquieu, bring me a glass of lemonade." Now it's a cup of coffee or a glass of Madeira I need, and ask for. Believe

* His Grand Chamberlain.

me, M. Molé, after thirty one begins to be less fitted for campaigning. Alexander died before noticing any decline.'

"Then, pulling out his watch: 'It's late, let us go back to the Empress.'"

"I followed him and withdrew. Napoleon was fond of exercising his marvellous sagacity on himself: he regarded himself as an exceptional being, and as such excited his own curiosity. I have many a time seen him use on himself that scalpel which was never out of his hand, with an impartial serenity which was a compliment to his pride.

"At this time we were watching him governing, administering and attending to the smallest details as if he had no interest in, nor even any recollection of, the destruction of that superb army which lay buried amid the snows of the north. Yet he did not lose a moment in creating another with which he certainly counted on restoring his fortunes and taking a brilliant revenge the moment the season allowed.

"At the same time he held privy councils in which a regency was being arranged, to prevent any renewal of plots such as that of Malet. The Privy Councils, in which the *senatus-consultus* were prepared and treaties or any extraordinary measures which circumstances required were examined, were composed of the great dignitaries, high officers of the Senate, ministers and presidents of sections in the Council of State.

"He would not let the seriousness of the situation seem to make any change in the ordinary system of government. As usual, every January and February the Emperor summoned administrative councils concerned with public works, and more especially those of roads and bridges, of which I was the Director-General. At these

I presented the Emperor with the *detailed budgets*, giving an account of the great works undertaken, new roads, changes of old roads, bridges, canals, navigational improvements in our rivers, and the general upkeep of the roads and pavements of Paris. These budgets, bound into two bulky volumes, are still in my possession. They make interesting reading to-day.

"The members of this council were the Minister of the Interior (the Comte de Montalivet), the President of the Section of the Interior (the Comte Regnault de Saint-Jean d'Angély), Baron de Chabrol, once an engineer and at this time Prefect of the Seine. It was at the council of January 7 that I presented Napoleon with my schemes for the bridges at Bordeaux and Saint-André de Cubzac on the Dordogne, and one for tunnelling through the Grotto des Échelles, projects I had prepared on the spot in the previous summer with the engineers appointed to carry them out. The Minister of the Interior, who had preceded me in the office of Director-General of Roads and Bridges, and during several years performed his duties with great diligence and to the Emperor's satisfaction, asserted that these three schemes were less valuable than I claimed, and were bound to entail expenditure out of all proportion to their utility. Regnault, who did not like me, raised the same objections as the Comte de Montalivet, but Napoleon adopted all my suggestions after a long discussion in which Deschamps, the Divisional Inspector and author of the idea of the two bridges, took part.

"I cannot repeat too often that I am not writing the history of the year 1813. My personal recollections, and those alone, are my subject. At that time I was seeing the Emperor in these Roads and Bridges Councils in which I played the principal part. I also saw him at the Council of State, on those rare occasions on which he

presided, and finally in the evenings, after dinner, in the Empress's drawing-room, by virtue of those *petites entrées* which I will now explain.

"The *petites entrées* only applied to Paris and Saint-Cloud, in other words to places where he remained for a considerable time at a stretch. When the Emperor arrived in Paris from being with the army or from Saint-Cloud, or when he left Paris to reside at Saint-Cloud, he drew up the list of the *petites entrées*.

"It was, so to speak, the list of his conversational partners* in moments of leisure. Conversation and plays, especially tragedies, were the only recreations I have known him to indulge in. Hunting, as he told me himself, he liked only as a form of violent exercise which he required for his health. It was also an essentially royal diversion he liked sharing with all the kings of Europe.

"In accordance with the rules of etiquette, for which he was a great stickler, the high dignitaries always entered first at these *petites entrées*. The three or four highest—and fortunately least talkative—played whist with the Empress. These were the High Chancellor, the High Treasurer and some of the ministers. The Prince of Beneventum rather despised these evenings; in any case his bad legs kept him away as there was so much standing.

"The other conversationalists were savants such as Laplace, Lagrange, Berthollet, Lacépède and Fontanes, who then held the palm among literary critics and whose style made him the oracle and model of good taste. Last came myself, the most envied and no doubt the least worthy—and for that reason obliged to make tactful use of the favour accorded me.

"On the first or second day after the Administrative Council I saw the Empress again: I noticed traces of

* *Causeurs* (Tr.).

ill-temper and great irritation on the Emperor's face. 'Have you read the English papers?' said the Duc de Bassano, who was standing by me. 'Their impudence and lies beat all their records.' 'No, I've no chance of reading them. Only the Government gets them, you know.' 'Well, just look at the "*Moniteur*" to-morrow.'

"I have had occasion to remark elsewhere that Napoleon never understood the working of English institutions nor believed that the English Press was not under the thumb of the Government. It must certainly be admitted that the impertinence and prevarication of that Press had enormously increased at this time.

"'It was *by order* that the French papers,' they were saying, 'reported the Emperor's hunting exploits, the reviews he holds, his visits to the theatre and the frequent councils at which he presides, whereas in fact he is obliged to keep his bed or his room owing to the care his bad health requires.'

"I looked at the '*Moniteur*' and duly saw an extremely violent article attacking the English ministers themselves quite as much as the newspapers to which this article was a reply. It had evidently been dictated by Napoleon, either to Menneval or the Duc de Bassano, in accordance with his invariable custom.

"The Emperor, reading papers which poured out shameful libels on himself and his family, reminded me of the lion in the fable who goes about roaring under the sting of the gnat he cannot flick from his back. Nothing, I repeat, could persuade him that the laws of England guarded the liberty of the Press, even in its greatest aberrations, and that the ministers had no power to suppress the very excesses they were none the less obliged to admit.

"His irritation at this stretch of water he could not cross had a good deal to do with his scheme for a continental blockade, or the exclusion of England from all the continental markets. It was to close the Russian harbours to English ships and merchandise that he made his expedition to Moscow, roused the fury of nations as well as kings, and ended by reducing to despair those very Frenchmen who were so proud of his genius and victories, and had hitherto obeyed him as the greatest man who had ever appeared on earth.

"I shall never forget the scene I witnessed at the time he was thinking of uniting Holland with France. I had been to the Tuileries one Sunday. The King and Queen of Naples and the King and Queen of Holland, who were still in Paris, had dined with him. As I was approaching the door of the drawing-room in which the imperial family were assembled, I recognized the thunderous voice of the Emperor. I entered, and this is what met my eyes.

"Amid the glare of a thousand candles and the blaze of diamonds and gowns, the men, in uniform, were lined up in a row before which Napoleon was striding up and down. His features were swollen and almost distorted with rage and his steps were rapid and brusque. His brother, Louis, was trying to follow him in spite of the species of paralysis which made movement difficult to him. I went up and stood by the King of Naples, who was wearing the resplendent uniform of his guards.

"'Don't forget,' Napoleon was saying to the King of Holland, 'that you are first and foremost a French prince. I put you on the throne of Holland solely to serve the interests of France and help me in all I am doing for her.'

"'You ought to have told me so before putting me on my throne. I never asked you for it: quite the

contrary. I begged you to leave me with the dignity of a French prince which I owed to you, and was all I wanted. What you ask of me now would mean ruin and disaster to a nation whose welfare you have entrusted to me, a nation whose happiness it is now my first duty to secure. Of course, I am still French at heart, but if ever the time comes when I am required to sacrifice Holland to your schemes I shall cease to reign over her.'

"At these last words the Emperor, getting angrier and angrier, began to reproach his brothers and sisters for their ingratitude and their pretence that they were no longer dependent upon him, though he had raised them from obscurity. At this point King Joachim gave me a nudge, and pointing to Louis, whispered in my ear: 'What a fool! If the Emperor ordered me to take a division of his Guard and throw all my Neapolitans into the sea, their goose would soon be cooked.' "*

"The Malet conspiracy had left a very deep impression on the Emperor's mind: he could not forget how readily several of his chief officials had accepted the story of his death and made way for a handful of rash, obscure, discontented adventurers.

"Some of the best of his servants, who had been struck by the decline in his energy and strength in the last campaign, said that since his return to the Tuileries the comforts of ordinary life and his association with men who were instruments of which he knew fully how to make the best use, his organizing genius, with its inexhaustible resourcefulness, had recovered all its vigour. It is the fact that he held and presided over many more administrative councils, devoted himself day and night to raising a new army as large, if not as war-hardened, as

* Seven lines deleted.

the army he had abandoned in the terrible retreat from Moscow, and at the same time worked to establish a regency to which he could safely leave the task of governing in his absence. I cannot think of this period without recording here not how he looks to me to-day but much more how he looked to me then when I was a spectator of his activities and to some extent participated in them.

"The Emperor had just asked the Senate for a levy of three hundred and fifty thousand men, comprising the reserves from the later classes and including that of the current year, 1813, and the whole class of the following year. It meant requiring France to send the last of her sons to the colours.

"The same day on which Regnault de Saint-Jean d'Angély announced to the Senate this fresh and grievous national sacrifice, I watched Napoleon reviewing long ranks of conscripts on the Carrousel. Next morning '*Le Moniteur*' called them 'magnificent men,' but their extreme youth and poor physique had roused a deep pity among the crowd around them. I had a long walk in the Tuileries gardens, reflecting upon everything I had just seen and soon upon a situation which was becoming desperate, and the formidable *dénouement* of which could not long be postponed.

"I had witnessed the beginnings of the man, a man who was even more extraordinary than great: I had seen him opening his career by restoring the confidence of all the nations—even those he had conquered—by revealing on the field of battle a genius and strength of will which had immediately won him recognition as the gifted emissary of Providence, for the purpose of curbing the spirit of revolution, if not of destroying it beyond recall.

"After his magnificent early campaigns in Italy he had

gone to Egypt to win the halo and unchallengeable prestige he needed to crown his final and most difficult task : that of disarming the Revolution without provoking reaction, disowning or condemning the doctrines which had made him without restoring the moral laws and social conventions which that Revolution had destroyed.

" Master of France and Europe by the glamour of his victories, he had brought the old parties and all interests, those who had suffered and those who had struck, victims and executioners alike, to abdicate in his favour. Indestructible convictions and the most fervent of passions lapsed into silence and held their hand, waiting for the time when the Supreme Power should think fit to recall the colossus he had sent upon earth to accomplish his designs. The era of pacification at home and social and political reorganization had begun and ended with the Consulate.

" It was then that far-seeing minds realized that there was a great weakness behind all these gifts, gifts so well calculated to dazzle the world. It was the infirmity of refusing to believe in the limitations, those remorseless frontiers, of human nature and activity. It is a curious thing that Napoleon, whose good sense was itself genius, never discovered the point at which the impossible begins.

" The more I saw of him, the greater was my conviction that he was always under the impression of the moment and thought only of satisfying his own desires and adding incessantly to his own glory and greatness. The slightest obstacle enraged him : he would sacrifice everything to overcome it, and in his satisfaction at discovering that whenever a collision occurred nothing could withstand his power or his will, when it came to choosing between the present and the future he preferred the present as the more certain and subject to his will.

In a word he thought less of leaving a race, or a dynasty, behind him than a name which should have no rival and a glory which could never be excelled.

"Even more extravagant than fantastic in his ideas, his treatment of Spain and the head of the Catholic world had shown that unmoral action or abuse of power was nothing to him so long as he attained his object. But more than all it was his expedition to Russia and his scheme for a continental blockade which made it plain to everyone, even his oldest colleagues in his work, that death alone could set a limit to his plans and put a curb on his ambition."

"'Impossible,' he said to me one day, 'is a word the meaning of which is wholly relative; every man has his *impossible*, according to his capacity. The impossible,' he added with a smile, 'is the spectre of the timid and the refuge of the coward. Believe me, in the mouth of power the word is only a confession of impotence.'"

"It was with this boundless confidence in his strength and genius that, imposing the sorrows and humiliations of conquest on all the nations in turn, he reduced them to desperation no less than their kings and, perhaps without suspecting the fact, changed the conditions of the struggle which had deluged Europe in blood since 1791. After 1791 the kings and aristocracies had combined in their effort to dam the revolutionary torrent and prevent the spread of political and philosophical dogmas which the eighteenth-century writers had made a lever more powerful than that of Archimedes to dislodge human societies from their ancient foundations.

"During the nine years which ended with the Eighteenth Brumaire the republican armies were sometimes victorious

and sometimes vanquished and could only keep up the struggle without bringing it to a conclusion while France, still bowed under the bloody tyranny of the vilest demagogue, only awaited the appearance of a sword, the hero of a hundred victories, to throw herself in his arms and implore him to substitute an absolute and enlightened autocracy for the horrible anarchy under which she groaned. Bonaparte had understood all that, and in answering the nation's call he asked that France should put her destinies in his hands and allow him to dispose of all her forces and resources for the accomplishment of his vast designs. At this time the object of his stubborn struggle with Europe had changed.

"England and the sovereigns of the continent, instead of having to defend themselves against the invasion of revolutionary ideas, found themselves face to face with the ambition of one man, the greatest captain of ancient or modern times, who now had France absolutely in his power, France to which he had just given back her tranquillity, civilization and pride. In the thirteen years between the creation of the first consul to the time, (1813), my memories of which I am now recording, Napoleon had proved to all the nations that they could escape from the unhappy status of a conquered race only by taking refuge under his sceptre and begging him as a favour to be allowed to form part of his Empire.

"The Moscow disaster had restored the hopes of his enemies. The kings soon realized that by combining against him they could overthrow him and, if not revolutionary notions, at any rate the craze for innovation and reform from which the French Revolution had sprung and which had been fermenting so long among the middle and educated classes of all the monarchies. Seeing that it would be easier for them to compromise with the ideas they

had dreaded so long than to resist Napoleon's armies and his insatiable ambition, they not only tolerated but even encouraged those ideas and allowed statesmen and famous writers to promote the formation of secret societies, associations such as 'The Friends of Truth and Nature,' 'The Friends of Young Germany,' etc., which were recruited even among the armies. Blinded by despair, or urged on by the craving for revenge, they were delighted to see officers and soldiers rushing to join the secret societies and thought they would fight even better if they added to their proved courage the fanaticism born of liberal and democratic opinions.

"I am not speaking *post hoc* when I say what I think to-day of this alliance of kings and peoples which ended in one supreme and single effort against a common enemy. The exchange of standards, so to speak, which placed the flag of authority and the monarchical principle on Napoleon's side, and on that of the legitimist monarchs the liberal flag on which was written 'The Liberation of all the Nations,' made me feel and believe in 1812 and 1813 all that I still feel and believe forty years later.

"The Revolution of 1789 and the ideas and principles of the eighteenth century which had torn France to pieces and transformed her social conditions, resumed their course, and the moment was not far distant for the fulfilment of a prophecy Napoleon let fall from his lips in one of his conversations with me."

"'When I am gone the Revolution, or rather the ideas which produced it, will resume their work with renewed vigour. It will be just like a book you open at the page you left. If clever hands do not dig a bed for the torrent and dam its course, in the long run it will overflow its

banks and swamp them with a grievous mass of ruin.' *

"While Napoleon was watching the storm rise around him and the defection of General Yorck's Prussian corps, the coldness of Austria and the state of public opinion throughout Europe seemed to be warning him of a supreme effort on the part of the kings and peoples he had conquered and oppressed; he was ostentatiously increasing the number of Roads and Bridges Councils and taking great interest in works such as the Hamburg bridge, the Hamburg-Wesel road, the Baltic-Rhine canal, as if he wanted to advertise how certain he was about the future of even his most distant conquests.

"From all quarters addresses—to a large extent officially prompted—were presented to him by towns, corporations, branches of industry, and so on; and almost all of them ended with voluntary gifts and the offer of sacrifices of all kinds.

"The corps of engineers of the Roads and Bridges branch, down to the lowest grade of official in my department and offices—to whom I had left a free hand—followed the general movement. The engineers asked me

* "I quoted these words of Napoleon when speaking in the Chamber des Pairs in 1822, omitting what he added:

"'These doctrines,' he said to me, 'I mean the so-called principles of 1789, will always be a dangerous weapon at the disposal of the dissatisfied, schemers and idealists of all ages. There are only two ways in which the danger can be averted. One alternative is to turn men's thoughts elsewhere and frankly prevent expression of opinion in pamphlets, the press and even books. If authority is not strong or clever enough to do that, there is nothing for it but to compromise with these alleged institutions and eternally attractive theories: in a word, to try and live with them. Believe me, M. Molé, that is what will happen when I have gone. An attempt will be made, perhaps with some semblance of success, but it will not last. We as a nation are born for glory—not glory but every form of glory, from that of Corneille and Bossuet to that of Condé or Turenne, but those governments which are miscalled democratic to us will never be anything but a short cut to anarchy. It is impossible to restore the old system; I have given France an epoch of glory and nothing but glory, and taken her arms to heights unknown in modern times. On my tomb I foresee for her nothing but new struggles with Europe in which she will succumb.' Napoleon spoke to me thus after the battle of Leipsic. I have not changed a word of what he said, and I wrote it all down the moment I left him." (Count Molé's note.)

to offer the Emperor twenty horses with equipment, my office staff three, etc. The Municipal Council of Paris excelled all the others by raising a cavalry regiment of five hundred men at the expense of the city. The terms in which its address was couched were as warm as those of all the others, and at the foot could be seen the signatures of Bricoigne, d'Aligre, Barthelemy, Lamoignon, etc.; in other words men who were at heart legitimists. Lamoignon was my uncle (and subsequently my brother-in-law), who had emigrated, and been wounded at Quiberon. I repeat that at this time the fall of the colossus was not only foreseen, but in many quarters desired as the only way of putting an end to the mortal hatred of Europe and the isolation in Europe with which France was faced.

"Everyone must admit that the French have never abandoned their King or Government, whatever they thought of them, when they were struggling against a foreign adversary. We have been seen to overthrow a throne and family, consecrated by fourteen centuries, for the most imaginary grievances; but if at the height of our revolutionary crises the threatened sovereign had had trouble with a foreign power, the factious and discontented would have held their hand and made common cause against the common enemy.

"In this case, whatever may be said in all the *post hoc* histories which have been produced for the benefit of some cause their writers desire to support, the French nation was convinced that the cause of Napoleon was no longer its own, and that the boundless ambition and faults innumerable of the man who had delivered it from anarchy sufficiently warranted its deserting him. And yet none betrayed him, neither the legitimists who had begun to hope again nor the revolutionaries who had never lost hope.

"At this time one of the Emperor's greatest anxieties

was to set up, under the form of a regency, a government which should be strong enough to make Paris safe against a *coup de main* or plot such as that engineered by Malet and Lahorie.

"On February 6 the draft bill for a regency was announced to the Senate by the High Chancellor, Cambacérès, who was presiding. Regnault de Saint-Jean d'Angély, whom Napoleon regularly selected for such occasions, read a *résumé* of the reasons for it which was full of commonplaces, neologisms and pretentious and high-sounding phrases.

"The Senate immediately appointed a committee to examine the scheme. The next day Pastoret made the report and the Senate unanimously adopted the *senatus-consultus* providing for the constitution of the regency.

"It was divided into nineteen clauses. In the first the regency was given to the mother of the infant Emperor; failing the mother to a prince of the blood; failing a prince of the blood to the highest in rank of the great dignitaries of State. Every French prince on a foreign throne was excluded.

"Clause II conferred on the Emperor the right of disposing of the regency by will. Clause III fixed the powers and duration of the regency. Clause IV provided that the regency council should consist of the first prince of the blood, all the uncles of the Emperor who were princes of the blood and the great dignitaries of the Empire. It reserved to the Emperor the power to add to the numbers of the regency council as he thought fit. The Regent (male or female) could not expel any of these additional members from the council. The powers of the council followed. Clauses V, VI, VII, VIII, IX and X concerned the guardianship of the Emperor while a minor, the oath to be taken by the Regent, the administration of the

imperial domain in case of the absence of the Emperor or the Regent, and lastly the coronation and that of the Empress and the Prince Imperial of Rome.

"Two days later I received a surprise summons to the Privy Council. When the Emperor was so moved, he would call a meeting of the Privy Council to discuss some exceptional matter or great interest of State. The councils were composed of ministers holding portfolios, ministers of State presiding in the Council of State, the great dignitaries of the Crown, high officers in the Senate, and, by exception, Councillors of State. It was in this last capacity that I could attend.

"This particular council was composed of the High Chancellor of the Empire, Cambacérès; the Vice Grand Elector, the Prince of Beneventum; Talleyrand, the Chief Judge (Massa); the Minister of Finance, the Duc de Greta; the Foreign Minister, the Duc de Bassano; the Minister of the Interior, Count Montalivet; Count Lacépède, High Chancellor of the Legion of Honour; the Minister of State in charge of the Section of the Interior, Count Regnault de Saint-Jean d'Angély; Count Molé, life member of the Council of State and Director-General of Roads and Bridges; Marshal the Duc de Conegliano, Colonel-General of the *Gendarmerie;* and the Duc d'Elchingen, Marshal Ney, Colonel-General of the Dragoons.

"At this council the bill for the constitution of the regency was read out. Unfortunately I have neglected to keep any note of what took place. My recollection is that Napoleon, though apparently calm and confident as to the campaign he was about to open, mentioned the vicissitudes of war and the fickleness of fortune in words which gave the lie to his imperturbable expression, and made still more anxious the anxious faces of those who

were listening to him, many of whom already looked as if they had become uncertain and somewhat lukewarm.

"The following day he wanted to preside at the Council of State again. He was trying to be everywhere at once, and, so to speak, taking counsel of all the high functionaries of his Government to rouse his ardour, revive his courage and give him that confidence in the future he was endeavouring to work himself up to. No man was ever more under the sway of the theories he had laid down for himself. He admitted no limits to the power of a great mind over itself. When he had succeeded in exhausting the resources of his genius in the preparation of a plan, he refused to admit the possibility of failure, fortifying himself with the thought that complete confidence in success was the surest way of gaining it.

"And yet, if I know him right, there was one thing alone which could suddenly upset his empire over himself. Shall I be believed if I say it? I have no proof, and it is my impression only which I can give my readers. A presentiment, the smallest thing he could regard as a presage—a little weakness he excused by telling himself that Cæsar, the great Frederick and many others were not exempt from it—could suddenly dim his vision and rob him of all his spirits.

"He had long passed the age at which he had told me men were fit for making war. If his mental faculties were as keen as ever, and no one could doubt it, his temperament had changed as much as the situation. In 1813 the *man*, by which I mean the physiological man in Napoleon, was as different to the man of the Italian campaigns in 1796 and 1797 as the Emperor's position, as conqueror of Europe and betrayed by fortune for the first time, differed from that of the young general who thought he had enslaved her.

"What gaps death had made around him! General Bertram had taken the place of Duroc, the oldest and most loyal and devoted of his comrades; Lannes, like Duroc and so many others, was in the tomb. He made up the number of his aides-de-camp from among high-born young officers, sometimes preferring those who had their way to make, though men of unimpeachable reputation and with every promise of courage and talent, to those who, full of honours and covered with glorious wounds, were anxious to enjoy the reward for all their efforts and noble feats of arms.

"It was a curious spectacle, this incipient decline of a power which had long kept the world under the spell of fear and now allowed one to foresee the moment in which, like everything else on earth, it would cease to exist. The sense of security he displayed, generally speaking, was less affected than those who have never known him would be tempted to credit. His amazing faculty for distributing his attention now stood him in good stead. He told himself that his principal task was to preserve his energy and the liberty of his thought; consequently he never let his mind be idle.

"In the few moments he gave to leisure in the Empress's drawing-room he tried to get a little distraction, and devoted himself to conversation, especially if he found a companion who did not arouse his distrust and seem to regard his end as already certain. I ought to say that more than once he seems to have thought he had found such a companion in me.

"On the evening of Saturday, February 13, I went to call on the Empress. The moment he saw me, Napoleon left the group around me and beckoned to me to follow him into the billiard-room. It was the signal for a long talk.

"'Have you read this morning's "*Moniteur*"?' he asked me. (It contained the Regency Act.)

"'Yes, Sire; I've seen the regency *senatus-consultus*. Your Majesty is anxious to save France from a surprise blow, some *coup de main* like Malet's, while you are away at the head of your armies. France has long been awaiting the publication of this important piece of legislation.'

"NAPOLEON: 'That doesn't matter very much. Don't think I'm under any illusion. If I make a will, it is certain that it will be torn up when I'm gone. Will the *senatus-consultus* be treated with any greater respect?'

"'Sire, the *senatus-consultus* will meet with no obstacle at first. When your death is known the parties will be taken aback and need to recover themselves, measure their strength and come to some sort of agreement if they are to reach a satisfactory solution. Everything will depend on the rapidity and energy shown by the Regency Government in exploiting this first moment of hesitation.'

"NAPOLEON (*with a smile and sigh which reveal great dejection*): 'Bah! If the King of Rome is twenty years old and a distinguished man, nothing else matters.' And almost simultaneously: 'What was Regnault's speech in the Senate like? I haven't read it.'

"'Sire, it seemed to be unworthy of the subject and below his usual standard.'

"NAPOLEON (*irritably*): 'The speeches of ministers in the Council of State, when explaining the origin and purpose of a bill, ought not to be published. They speak in the name of the Government and too much importance is attached to what they say. People think I talk like that and say silly things. They imagine I have dictated their speeches or at any rate know what is going to be said. There is nothing to be said against publishing the speech

of the Senate Committee's reporter. He is only the mouthpiece of his colleagues. I have glanced at Pastoret's speech: I think it was good.' *

"'It is better than Regnault's, Sire. At any rate there's a certain amount of erudition, which is skilfully applied.'

"Napoleon: 'I'm told Pastoret is an excellent man.'

"'Yes, Sire, he is extremely learned in law and history. In my youth I often had the advantage of a talk with him. I often go to Madame Pastoret's house, and I must confess to Your Majesty that her company is a far greater attraction to me than her husband's. She is not so learned, but clever and far more pleasant than he.'

"Napoleon: 'I hardly know her, and what you tell me makes me regret it. Pastoret has written a book; is it a good one?'

"'The title of the book is quite enough to stamp it from more than one point of view. It is called "The Three Legislators," who are Zoroaster, Mahomet and Jesus Christ. The title shocked me, but I know the author too well not to try and read it. It seemed to me too dull to be dangerous and to teach very little, notwithstanding its display of erudition.'

"Napoleon (*with a gay laugh*): 'I'm tempted to believe you about that book; I do not like Pastoret's face.'

"'Does the Emperor know how Mirabeau described it?'

"Napoleon: 'No.'

"'His face,' he said, 'is a mixture of tiger and calf, but fortunately there's more of the calf.'

* "It was not at all probable that the Emperor had seen or read Pastoret's report without glancing at Regnault's speech. He obviously wanted to know what I thought or had heard of either speech, and the failure of Regnault's had annoyed him and led him to disown it."

"Napoleon (*laughing hilariously*): 'Yes, there's more of the calf, certainly. I can't say I see any tiger. In Russia I met Pastoret's son, who is an auditor. He seemed to me a promising young man. He has a face and frank manner which I liked.'

"'That young man was attached to my department. His mother recommended him to me and I am taking an interest in him.'

"Napoleon was silent for a moment and then resumed: 'The good thing about this regency is that it is in accordance with all our traditions and historical memories. It will be in the hands of an Empress of a family which has been on the throne of France in days gone by, an Empress in every way worthy to hold such great power. Let there be no mistake about it, the Empress is a woman with a splendid mind who is capable of becoming quite fit to manage the highest interests and direct the most important affairs. She has something of the character of her ancestress, Anne of Austria. She would adhere rigidly to a decision when once taken, and stand by the minister who had advised it. Without seeming to do so, she sees and knows everything and keeps everything under observation.

"'When she first came here her position was very difficult. The old nobility, the Faubourg Saint-Germain, expected too much. The revolutionaries thought they were lost, or at any rate expected to be constantly humiliated. She has kept the former in bounds or at a distance, soothed the susceptibilities of the latter, and shown neither fear nor favour. But that must not lead us to fear that she does not know who people are or what is their worth. She knows quite well that so-and-so voted for the death of Louis XVI, and also knows everyone's birth and record. She considered at first that it was her duty to imitate me in everything. She treated everyone

she met not according to his antecedents but to the rank or functions I had conferred upon him. She did so, I assure you, without my having to say a word. I have personally been amazed sometimes to find her so familiar with affairs and personalities, and I often wonder who has instructed her.'

"'I can assure Your Majesty that when you are away the Empress is just the same; she single-mindedly follows the track she has marked out for herself. It is remarkable that, being so young and in so difficult a position, she has made no mistake. The highest and lowest classes of society have given her a warm welcome, but the class in between has been afraid that she might give the nobility too much influence.'

"Napoleon: 'That's quite right; it was the two classes you mention who were the most enthusiastic about my marriage. And yet even among the lowest class we must except a section which is fairly numerous in Paris and particularly formidable; I mean the section I call the *tricoteuses*, who hate the Empress, and feed on the memories of all the outrages they inflicted upon the unhappy Marie Antoinette. As long as I am alive that scum will not move, because it found out all about me on the Thirteenth Vendémiare and knows that I am always ready to stamp on it if I have any trouble.'

"'Sire, nothing can move in your presence, and no man dare; but when you are away everything is ready to boil up again, as you know only too well.'

"Napoleon: 'Oh, yes, I know, and I am very concerned about it. Men are, and will be, much more venturesome since the Russian disaster. I *must* have one more campaign and get the better of these wretched Russians: we must drive them back to their frontiers and make them give up the idea of leaving them again.'

"'Do not be misled, Sire; for the first time it is with

the deepest regret and the greatest misgiving that men see you go. They feel that you are needed at the head of your armies but fear that you do not realize how badly you are needed here.'

"NAPOLEON (*with the air of one thinking aloud and quite sure of the man listening to him*): 'What's to be done, my friend? After all, there is no one I can put in my place anywhere, either with the army or here. Of course, I should be only too glad if I could make war by my generals. But I have let them get too accustomed to doing nothing but carry out my orders: there's not one who can command the others and none of them knows anything but how to obey me. Some day perhaps the Viceroy' (Eugène de Beauharnais) 'will become able to take command. He did very well in the last campaign and may yet develop. The King of Naples is incapable of doing so: he lost me my army,* for I still had an army when I left it, and I have one no longer.

"'As long as I was there there was grumbling but no loss of obedience. After I left, Murat lost his head, failed to make himself obeyed by anyone, and discipline utterly went to pieces. My troops robbed the army chest at Vilna of twelve millions, and it was impossible to do any more with the men. The King of Naples is all right when he hears the bullets whistle past or sees a real danger twelve feet high, but when he imagines danger instead of seeing it he becomes as timid as a pregnant woman. He has no moral courage, and that's because he has no intelligence. The danger he does not see frightens him because he gives it a spectral form and cannot reduce it to its true proportions.

"'Now take an intelligent man and he'll have that

* The situation of the army was more than compromised when Napoleon abandoned it.

moral courage which enables one shrewdly to calculate all the chances : on the other hand he won't be able to hear the bullets whizz past—and still less the roar of cannon—without being horribly frightened. Poor human nature! It's always incomplete. How many times we have to punish for faults which are only the products of the habits or constitution of the man who commits them!

" ' The Viceroy is less brilliant than the King of Naples and has less prestige on the field of battle ; he is not an Ajax, the type of warrior in action. To tell the truth he's only a mediocrity, though there is more proportion, completeness and harmony about him. He's a man and a whole man. Would you believe that the King of Naples never writes to his children without shedding fat tears on the paper ? His impressions are too much for him. Instead of controlling them he lets them overwhelm him. In the terrible retreat, for instance, he was in the depths of despondency. In my own case it has taken me years of cultivated self-control to prevent my emotions from betraying themselves. Only a short time ago I was the conqueror of the world, commanding the largest and finest army of modern times. That's all gone now!

" ' I think,' he added, ' that I kept all my composure, I might even say preserved my unvarying high spirits : I don't believe anyone who saw me then can deny it. Yet don't think that my heart is less sensitive than those of other men. I'm a very kind man. But since my earliest youth I have devoted myself to silencing that chord within me which never yields a sound now. If anyone told me when I was just about to begin a battle that my mistress whom I loved to distraction was breathing her last it would leave me cold.

" ' Yet my grief would be as great as if I gave way to it, but I should begin by closing my heart to it, and after

the battle I should mourn for my mistress if I had time. Without all this control over myself do you think I should have done all I have done. The hours fly swiftly, and in my position the loss of a moment might mean the loss of everything, even all I had won.'

"'As you said once before, Sire, you have aimed at making yourself simply a political machine, guarding yourself from everything which enthrals or enslaves a human being.'

"Napoleon: 'When I left my army I foresaw everything which has happened, but I felt there was no time for hesitation and that I must return to Paris at the earliest possible moment if I wanted to overawe Europe and tell her to choose between war and peace. My generals fully understood; when I called them together for a council of war they all said: "Go; there is nothing for you to do here now, and it is in France that you are needed." In this emergency they showed a spirit which was truly royal. If I had only been the commander of an army I should have spent the winter in Moscow, for I could have maintained myself there. But in the position in which I found myself I could not allow my communications with France to be cut. France might have been six months without news of me, and what would have happened during that time?'

"'It is impossible to say, Sire. The Malet affair showed Your Majesty the possible consequences of a *coup de main* in your absence. Once our society is reduced to dust, by which I mean a mass of individuals, it can resist no longer. No institutions, no social conventions to protect us: no more classes, social groups, community of interests. All of us are so absolutely accustomed to derive our inspiration and impetus from you that in time of peril not one of us dares save himself and take the initiative in the presence of danger.'

"NAPOLEON : 'Yes, it's a pity ; Berthier wrote to me recently : "I do not know what to do, and when you are not here I even doubt myself. For fifteen years I have never thought for myself and have grown accustomed to getting all my ideas from you." '

" 'There is no one, Sire, either on the civil or military side, who cannot say the same. It is inconceivable that on October 23 and the days following not one great body in the State raised its voice and gave a lead to public opinion ! Everyone knew at once that the rumour of your death was a lie, and yet everyone waited for you to tell them what they were to do and say.'

"NAPOLEON : 'Of course, we are an eight-day monarchy. We lack the instincts and habits of monarchy. The society which you describe so well as having been reduced to dust by the Revolution can only fear and obey. If it could maintain itself it would also be able to resist, and it would become ungovernable. Frochot's case is very striking.* No one bears him any ill-will for his conduct. Some regret his fall and all are sorry for him, even the Council of State, though they condemn him. Posterity will never know how difficult it has been to build a monarchy from the material in my hands. This nation has become essentially irreligious.'

" 'But it loves its religion, Sire, and you will see that demonstrated if——'

"NAPOLEON (*warmly*) : 'You've mistaken my meaning ; I don't say it has no religion : I say it is irreligious, by which I mean that nothing is sacred to it now, that it raises or rends all veils, and there is nothing it respects or reverences. On the other hand I have had and shall

* Frochot, Councillor of State and Count and Chevalier of the Empire, was Prefect of the Seine in 1812. He had accepted the story of the Emperor's death and done nothing to prevent the Malet conspiracy. Napoleon had dismissed him.

again have to work with the revolutionaries, because they have public opinion behind them, and the opinion of the army, too. Two whole generations have seen the people and the army, and them alone, in power and in control of affairs : in a word they recognize no other authority.'

" ' Your Majesty has taken into service a large number of men who had nothing to do with the Revolution, and even its victims ; I could even say that Your Majesty has called upon men of birth, and never had reason to regret it.'

" Napoleon : ' I admit that, but haven't I had to use force for that purpose ? Haven't I, more or less, had to drag the old nobility into my service. And tell me, honestly, how many of them are fit for public affairs to-day ? '

" ' Haven't they been kept out of public affairs for twenty-five years, Sire ? One can't familiarize one's self with public business in prison or exile.'

" Napoleon : ' I won't contradict you, but for one reason or another there are very few of them I can employ to-day, and personally I have no time to wait. My business is to move, to act and go forward. I want eyes, legs and arms, and I can't use men who have none. There will be their children, but they will have to develop ; they're an element for the future.'

" ' Your Majesty must surely have been satisfied with the large number of young men of that class in the armies ? '

" Napoleon : ' They are not only brave, but good subjects, well brought up and the soul of honour. The army recognizes their worth, and they will once more take their place in the State. Ney certainly does not like nobles, but he never stops praising one of the young Montesquieus,* a relation of the High Chamberlain.'

" ' He is my wife's first cousin, Sire.'

* " The Emperor often got proper names wrong. He said Montesquieu instead of Montesquiou." (Count Molé's note.)

"Napoleon: 'He was so cool and kept his head so well during the retreat, particularly at the Beresina, that we have the highest hopes of him. But to return to the subject of Frochot. How do you account for him?'

"'A man of good birth, Sire, a man with real monarchical instincts would never have behaved as he did. I think his intentions would not have been more innocent than Frochot's, but he would have understood the meaning of honour and loyalty to his oath.'

"Napoleon (*after a pause*): 'Of course, there was nothing wrong with his brains: he had good ones; I also think he was attached to me. But he lacked that nobility of mind which is a better counsellor than brains at an awkward moment. He was a clerk, with the instincts of a clerk, an ex-secretary to Mirabeau, and at the bottom of his heart he had no love for monarchies.'

"'He didn't believe in monarchy, Sire; you see the proof in the fact that he never even thought of the King of Rome. He thought the Emperor was dead, and he sat down to watch the revolution which took him by surprise and was developing before his eyes; his mistake was the offspring of his mind rather than his heart. I believe he was genuinely devoted to Your Majesty. The only point that seems to me inexplicable is that a man whom he had called his friend for thirty years told him the news of your death in the words *Fuit Imperator*.'

"Napoleon: 'Those words struck me more than anything else when I read the files of the conspiracy in Moscow. I said to myself: "That's a man who has no love for me."'

"'And yet you had heaped favours on him, Sire. His great position and fortune he owed to Your Majesty. But experience teaches us every day that when men who are the product of the Revolution and brought up on its

principles have to choose between their political opinions and their interests they are capable of preferring the triumph of their principles to their interests.'

"NAPOLEON: 'You mean the contrary.'

"'No, Sire, I mean that around you are several individuals, loaded with titles, honours and wealth, who would willingly sacrifice all those advantages for the success of their political views. They will never attempt anything against you because they believe themselves bound to your person by their oath and the benefits they have received from you. But when you are no longer here they will reject a form of government they loathe and return to that system they have always thought a better one.'

"NAPOLEON: 'That may be true of a handful of fanatics. But the men of the Revolution are getting old. Meanwhile we must take things as they come and provide for the needs of the moment. During my absence the High Chancellor, though enjoying everyone's confidence, was not high enough above the leading figures in the State to make them obey him. He dared not exile or arrest a high dignitary or officer of the Crown.* The Empress will do so if she has good advice behind her. She is too young to govern by herself: the High Chancellor will continue to govern *de facto* and she will give the Government the authority of her name. We must also take that a man of standing in the army, like Berthier, remains in Paris to take command.'

"'It is even more essential for Your Majesty to return as soon as possible.'

"NAPOLEON (*smiling and drawing out his watch*): 'We've talked enough; it's late and I'm going to bed.'"

* "I have always thought that the Emperor was thinking of the Prince de Beneventum on this occasion." (Count Molé's note.)

CHAPTER VIII

Continuation and conclusion of the manuscript, "The Hundred Days."—Count Molé's comments on the Emperor's irritable state.—Sitting of the Legislative Body on February 14, 1814.—Attitude of those present.—The Emperor's speech.—The Concordat.—Outrages falsely attributed to Napoleon.—Digression on the historical novel.—M. de Montalivet's review of the situation of the Empire.—Count Molé is summoned to the Trianon and instructed to present the budget to the Legislative Body.—His embarrassment.—The Emperor dictates to him notes as a text for his speech.—Count Molé's speech to the Legislative Body on March 11.—His surprise and anger on finding an utterly distorted report of it in the "*Moniteur*."—Lahorie.—European civilization passes through a universal crisis: the feebleness of monarchy in Europe.—General tendency of public thought.—Napoleon alarmed for the future of Europe.—Untrue allegations by the Bonaparte family.—The session of the Legislative Body is closed.—The address is read by Count de Montesquieu, the High Chamberlain.—Portrait of the High Chamberlain.—The Emperor's speech.—Count Molé's reflections.—Count Molé is again sent for by the Emperor.—Conversation with Napoleon: the discontent of the great public bodies in the State; the Emperor's methods in securing acceptance of unpopular methods; a stain on his glory; the splendid spirit of the nation.—The Emperor's views on a possible peace.—The Bourbons.—The Orleanists.—Napoleon tries to establish an aristocracy.—Cambacérès.—Napoleon's opinion of Talleyrand.

CHAPTER VIII

"WHEN I returned home I rushed for my pen, as I felt it almost a duty to record my recollections, and even the exact words, of these conversations which, perhaps more than anything else, will reveal Napoleon, the real Napoleon, to those who come after me. I was still writing at three o'clock in the morning. My candles gave out and I went to bed, not to sleep, but to think things over. I took note that the Emperor, who was to open the Legislative Body next day, had not said a word to me about it. I was all impatience to know whether I should discover in his words the preoccupations and ideas which were fermenting in his brain as he talked with me. Since fortune had begun to be fickle with him Napoleon had shown less ability to make full use of the resources she left him than to profit boldly and skilfully by her favours.

"From this time forth to the end of his life we were to see him fly into a rage and rush headlong, so to speak, at the obstacle she put in his way instead of winning her back by his tact and overcoming her reluctance by showing her that he could do without her. It was only on the field of battle that he was to become greater and greater until his abdication.

"On the next day, February 14, I was present at the memorable session of the Council of State of which I was a member. I do not fear to say that I was not the only man there who foresaw the imminent *dénouement* of this drama. But I say emphatically that since his first Italian campaigns Napoleon had been the object of my constant admiration, an admiration in which there was more

amazement than enthusiasm, because not one of the generous and lofty virtues or those qualities of heart which alone could have attracted and bewitched my youth could be discovered in the hero.

"At the same time I must frankly add that I was touched and even flattered by the way in which he had always treated me. He not only let me see how pleased he was to talk with me, but—and this appealed to me far more—he seemed to be anxious to hide the bad sides of his nature from me, and persuade me that he was a kinder and better man than political exigencies and circumstances had allowed him to show.

"I was deeply moved as I saw him enter the chamber, followed and surrounded by the princes of his family and all the great figures he had created—officers of his Crown and dignitaries of the Empire, and mount the steps of the throne among all the senators, legislators and Councillors of State, who greeted him with cheers and could not take their eyes from him, though their faces betrayed infinitely more anxiety and gloom than his own.

"My feelings towards him were less in the nature of sympathy than that pious reflection which follows the contemplation of mighty disasters, those great human downfalls whose purpose it is to prove to men that they are only the instruments of Providence, and that on the day on which the greatest of them falls the very mob which has obeyed him will judge and remember him less by his glory than the evil he has wrought.

"Napoleon succumbed under the consequences of the three greatest errors his ambition made him commit, errors from which a little political honesty could have saved him. I may remark incidentally that I have read my history well and devoted the whole force of my mind to studying the march of events in my time, and I say

this—not for the benefit of those who will read my words after I am gone, but because it is my most heartfelt conviction—that a man may have a marvellous intellect without being honest, and that, even from the point of view of success, no qualities of mind can replace that vestige of the truth of which the logical and inevitable consequence is the observance of honesty.

"At this time Napoleon found himself faced with terrible new enemies whose numbers and power he had hopelessly under-estimated. The coalition against him no longer consisted of the English, Russians, Austrians, Prussians and Spaniards, but of men of all countries whom the conviction of injustice and oppression had driven to prefer death; it was that mass of human hearts in which religious faith still survived in all its vigour, and lastly that multitude which refused passively to accept the resigned attitude of these conquered nations, the only relic of whose former existence was a name which they could no longer remember without blushing.

"His speech was nothing but a long and unfortunate effort to convince them of something which he had utterly ceased to believe, and soothe a resentment the irresistible force of which he was realizing too late. Thus he represented the desert, in the midst of which the French army had found itself as the result of burning four thousand villages, fifty towns and finally Moscow itself, as the work of Tartars avenging themselves on their ancient conquerors, and described his affairs and position as flourishing and prosperous at the very moment when the rigours of an early winter threatened his army with a catastrophe. He also announced the end of his difficulties with the Pope, thanks to a Concordat which he had personally made*

* "On January 28 '*Le Moniteur*' had announced that on the 19th the Emperor, accompanied by the Empress, had been hunting at Grosbois with the Prince of Wagram. This very belated communication caused comment,

the captive pontiff sign at Fontainebleau, without realizing that such an expedition would give all true believers a new grievance and be regarded as an abominable outrage by the others.*

"Next he praised the fidelity of the conquered provinces,

and it was soon known that Napoleon and Marie Louise had been to Fontainebleau where the Pope was residing, guarded by *gendarmerie* and surrounded by Italian and French cardinals, who had never ceased to overwhelm him with every mark of veneration and devotion. My readers will have noticed that the Emperor had not breathed a word about the Concordat or his expedition to Versailles in my conversation to him on February 13. With me he never broached the topic of his relations with Rome; he knew my opinion on this subject. Generally speaking, he avoided wounding sincere convictions, especially those of men he wanted to keep." (Count Molé's note).

* "While speaking as I do here of the equally impolitic and scandalous conduct of Napoleon towards an old man whose high character and sacred functions made him the object of universal reverence and interest, I cannot refrain from once more denouncing the legends as to the interview and conferences at Fontainebleau invented by Napoleon's detractors. When I received M. de Vigny into the Académie Française I had an opportunity of denying the account of this affair which he gave in one of his historical novels. Napoleon was incapable of the brutalities he attributes to him, and he could never have so utterly forgotten the advantages his policy had derived from the authority of the Pope, and the various resistances he had neutralized by giving satisfaction to Catholic sentiment: it was not at the moment when, under the pressure of misfortune, he realized the necessity of undoing all that could be undone of his mistaken policy towards Rome, that he would have added to the oppression and confinement of the Holy Father acts of which only the coarsest of drunken brutes would have been capable. Need I add that M. de Vigny, who speaks as an eye-witness, obtained all his details solely from his imagination.

"In our day, Walter Scott, by the enormous success of his historical novels, has dealt truth and history a blow from which they will have considerable difficulty in recovering. With the power of his talents, I might almost say genius, while distorting truth he has imitated it so well and produced probability with so strong a resemblance to reality that even those who best realize the importance of maintaining the accuracy and integrity of history—the archives of the nations—have been half bewitched or intimidated by the glamour of success and have refrained from protesting in good time. My unauthoritative voice has been raised more than once, and I take this opportunity of satisfying myself by recording in this note an opinion which has its source in my passionate love of truth. Once the school of the historical novel was established, its disciples have been numerous, success was easy and offered safe and certain profits to mediocrity. Men of the world swallowed wholesale everything they found in books like the '*Conspiration de Cinq-Mars*,' or the '*Histoire des Girondins*.' Dramatic effect took the place of truth. The more striking the tableaux, the more vivid the colours, the more pathetic was the drama and the less was the reader tempted to verify the accuracy of the story or the characters which had moved him so deeply. What more can truth do? they ask. Would it move you more strangely? Would it make you shed tears? Would you feel more admiration, or more indignation? Could you find better lessons than in some of these books? Away then with barren studies, say the masters of the school. Whatever stories the canvas may give us it is for art and imagination to decorate them. Charmed readers will multiply and success be complete. What more do you want?" (Count Molé's note).

though he knew that he was on the point of losing them, and declared that a Napoleonic dynasty would for ever remain in possession of the throne of Spain. Then he protested his sincere desire to make peace while reiterating all the demands which made it impossible. By way of conclusion he fell back upon his favourite theme, that at no time had agriculture and industry in France reached a higher standard of prosperity and that war, far from prejudicing the increase of population, had actually promoted it.

"Three days later the Count de Montalivet, Minister of the Interior, made a speech summarizing the position of the Empire. It was a commentary on the imperial address. With the aid of the figures and statistical data which were so popular at this time he confirmed all that the Emperor had said about the increase of the population and the progress of our agriculture and industry. Napoleon was then residing in the Trianon palace, as was his custom during Holy Week, and sometimes for the whole Easter fortnight.*

"He received hardly anyone; his ministers did not visit him unless and until he summoned them, and he only summoned them individually. I was very astonished to receive a letter from the chamberlain on duty telling me that the Emperor would expect me at eight o'clock that evening. I did not find him in the Empress's boudoir, where he was usually to be found, but in the study in which he worked.

* "He kept out of public view during Holy Week and the fortnight during which the Church allows the faithful to perform their pascal duty. He could not make up his mind to carry his breach with the philosophers to the point of acting as he believed, nor did he desire to wound the susceptibilities of the clergy and scandalize true believers by living and moving in the public eye. Thus all could be certain that to him religion was only a matter of politics. In any case, I must repeat once more, that at the bottom of his heart the subject remained an open one. I shall venture to say that he had not the inward conviction either to believe or disbelieve. He kept his thoughts from these high interests, which he certainly would not have been able to take to heart without feeling himself hampered in his ambitions and policy."

"'M. Molé,' he said, 'I want you to present the budget to the Legislative Body. Don't tell me you are not a financier; you're a man of intellect and I remember telling you before that it is quite possible you would make an excellent Minister of War. With intellect a man can do anything. When it is the real thing, through and through, he quickly learns the technical side of anything. Believe me, every man finds his measure everywhere. With a quick mind and and grasp, a man who likes work and has the organizing instinct can become a good and useful minister to me. I shall supply everything else he may lack. The situation is serious; what you have to make is a political speech. Sit down at my table and write down a few lines I am going to dictate to you. I'm not going to tie you down to repeating word for word what you have written; I'm going to give texts and you can comment on them as you hear them.'

"I knew the Emperor, and could have no illusions as to the position in which he was putting me. To speak from his place in the Chamber, as he had done himself, and defend him for preferring the abyss to the slightest sacrifice of his ambition, was something to which I was firmly resolved not to lend my voice, my pen or my name.

"On the other hand, for the first time to refuse him my assistance when he was threatened with the anger of Heaven and the vengeance of men, to give him reason to class me—whom he had always treated with the greatest consideration and respect—with those who had served him only to satisfy their personal ambitions, was something equally abhorrent to me, and I admit I felt a kind of torture in foreseeing that from now on to the catastrophe my relations with him would become equally strained and delicate.

"Hardly had I seated myself at his desk and taken up

a pen before Napoleon, striding rapidly up and down, began to dictate to me in his jerkiest tones. It was an avalanche of words and ideas, and I had the greatest difficulty in catching a few of them as they fell. 'Am I going too fast?' he asked. 'I must admit it is impossible to follow you, Sire.' 'I'm not surprised! Only Menneval and Maret can write as fast as I talk; I'll go more slowly.'

"But after a few words which were not so fast there was the same pace as before, and the same impossibility of getting down not merely all his words but even enough of them to make out the whole sense. Inaccuracies were very numerous and compelled me to edit the notes subsequently. I confined myself therefore to the most striking features, those which gave me the trend, the objects and the economics of the speech.

"He certainly intended it to be less financial than political and to bring home to the Legislative Body that he would get rid of it if it hesitated to give the country the signal for a supreme effort to bring victory back to his standards and save the last village of his conquests. What he most desired—and I understood it only too well—was that France should admit no other interests than his, and should hurl herself with him and after him into the gulf in which he preferred to perish rather than compromise.

"I took a good deal of trouble to make it seem as if I were writing as fast as he spoke. After half an hour he was tired, stopped and said to me: 'That's enough; you know all my ideas now. Take away these notes and make good use of them.' He did not dismiss me and seemed to be waiting for me to do something. I think he would have liked me to suggest that I should read my speech to him before I delivered it.

"I was absolutely determined to do nothing of the kind. That would have meant my being faced with the alternative of giving way or breaking with him. To yield was impossible and to break with him would have been painful and seemed ungenerous. I returned to Paris engrossed in melancholy reflections, which all brought me to the conclusion that Napoleon was passing through every stage of his decline—and his downfall would find him—as autocratic and inflexible as in the days of his omnipotence.

"But, after all, I was to speak in his name and convey to the Legislative Body that its feeblest representations would be regarded as factious opposition and might become a reason for ending its career. I went to work and remained more than dissatisfied with what I had done. The task I had failed in evading was not merely difficult: it was *impossible* for both the Emperor and the Legislative Body to be satisfied with me. The former was more or less asking the country to refuse no sacrifice and die with him, and at the same time threatening to destroy even such parodies of institutions as the Legislative Body and the Senate if they let fall a complaint or displayed a spark of independence.

"On the other hand the Legislative Body, whose dissatisfaction was growing rapidly every day, would listen to me with all the more prejudice, because in its eyes it was to my blind admiration for Napoleon and submissiveness to his will that I owed the fact that I had reached the highest ranks in the State at so early an age.*

* "Those *petites entrées* which Napoleon was always giving me (of which I have spoken), and the long conversations with him, in which I was seen engaged, had aroused incredible jealousy among my colleagues in the Council of State and the illustrious savants whom the Emperor often left in the Empress's *salon* in order to talk to me. Even at this early age I learned what implacable envy a young man must expect to whom fortune has been too kind, and who has come to the front otherwise than by *labor improbus*." (Count Molé's note).

"On March 11 the Order of the Day of the Legislative Body announced that the budget would be introduced by Councillors Count Molé, Bégouen (of Havre) and Baron Louis. I went with my colleagues to the opening of the sitting. An air of profound melancholy and anxiety reigned around us and was apparent on every face. I should much have preferred, and in the circumstances I think it would have been far better, that Baron Louis should have introduced the budget. He had an extremely high reputation amongst financiers. A Liberal of '89 and an Anglomaniac, his opinions had not changed. The Emperor had no particular liking for him, and his rough and sometimes rude manners cleared him of the slightest suspicion of sycophancy and flattery. When I came down from the tribune the faces of my audience seemed to me just as gloomy as when I began.

"Next morning I lost no time in opening '*Le Moniteur*' to read my speech. What was my astonishment, or rather my anger, at finding something totally different from what I had said and written. My amazement and suspicion increased when I recognized several phrases which had been dictated to me at the Trianon, and actually with the remarkable inaccuracies I had then noticed.

"I considered what I ought to do. Should I at once go and complain to the Emperor? I thought that that would be a tactless course and, more than that, too naïve. He was responsible for what had happened, it was clear, but he would pretend to be hurt by my suspicions and angrily send me away to the '*Moniteur*' officers to find out what had happened in the printing. I therefore contented myself with sending someone* clever, and

* "It was Lahorie, whom I have so often mentioned in my memoirs. He was at the Duc de Bassano's service, as well as mine. Neither loyal nor

eminently suitable for such a mission, to the officers of this paper and the Secretary of State, where the Duc de Bassano controlled the official news sheet, which was nothing but the docile instrument and depository of all the Emperor's desires.

"I then found out what I had not known hitherto—that, like all speakers whose speeches were to be reproduced in the columns of the '*Journal Officiel*,' I had an absolute right to correct the proofs myself and thus secure accuracy in reproduction. What hurt me most was that the Emperor, or the Duc de Bassano in his name, had not summoned me to discuss the changes he desired. To alter what I said and attribute to me words of which I had shown disapproval was to treat me admittedly as Napoleon was in the habit of treating men, though it had hitherto seemed to me he had made me an exception. In the time of his prosperity I should have sent in my resignation next morning, but I will admit that in certain respects I was very attached to this extraordinary man, who had given me from my youth so many proofs of regard and confidence and appeared to have a liking for myself and my mind which flattered me more than anything else.

"I endeavoured, therefore, to conceal my feelings. It was patent that I could never again conscientiously agree to serve him as a mouthpiece. In public and right down to his fall he meant to defend and stand by his past,

disloyal, he served us both, trying to win our favour by reporting the secrets he had discovered. But as he was intelligent and unattached, kind without any sort of devotion, he did not mean to inflict the smallest possible injury on those whose confidence he gained. He told me that the Emperor had made the Duc de Bassano bring him the first proofs of my speech, and that he had himself pieced together the rags of those scattered notes I had brought away from the Trianon. Bassano had said to him (Lahorie vowed that Bassano had told him himself): 'M. Molé is sensitive, he will not be pleased.' 'Bah!' Napoleon had answered, 'a man can't speak in my name without accepting beforehand all my corrections. Anyhow, if he complains I will see him, as I don't want him to be displeased.'" (Count Molé's note).

including the mistakes which were now bringing him to disaster. It was, therefore, my duty to leave his usual orators, the Regnaults and Defermons, the duty of speaking in his name, but I meant to be loyal to him to the bitter end and never give him cause to accuse me of abandoning him the moment misfortune crossed his path.

"May I venture to add that the approaching situation of the prodigious man, whose downfall I had long foreseen, was in my eyes but an incident in that all but universal crisis through which European civilization was passing, a crisis the starting-point of which may be found in the books and doctrines of the eighteenth century, or rather, to be even more precise, in the reform of Luther, who put forward a dogma—that of the supremacy of human reason—which was subversive of all other dogmas, and invalidated and threw doubt upon all that had been believed hitherto.

"Anarchy, which is only the absence of all recognized authority, and the disorders which inevitably flow from it had for a moment been suppressed by the sword of a conqueror in the hand of a man of genius. But if intelligent force seemed the world's master its reign was bound to come to an end, restricted as it was to the life of one man, and the true principles on which moral, political and social order rests had not been restored in human hearts or set forth on any standard. It is true that kings and courts had ceased to be the scandal they were in the eighteenth century. No longer did a Louis XV outrage the public sense of shame and allow philosophers to defend the corruption and disorder of which his life offered so many examples.

"No longer did a Frederick, so-called "great," give the world a picture of materialism mounted on a throne and humble the glory of arms to the point of soliciting the

praises of Voltaire or Alembert. But the kings and their armies, vanquished time and time again, and the charges levelled against monarchy—not without justice—of being incapable, feeble and even degraded (as degraded it was at this very time by the divorce suit so cynically brought against the Princess of Wales by the heir to the throne of England), left no hope of seeing truth and justice rule the destinies of empires and guard the rights of all.

"France, it must be admitted, had never believed in the permanence of a state of affairs which was founded on violence, maintained by force and justified by military glory. France, in making common cause, and at such a cost, with the man who had raised her name so high and whose approaching end she foresaw, was only respecting herself and remaining true to her own greatness.

"It was a curious spectacle to see a great nation throwing itself wholeheartedly into such a task, and affecting in its official language a devotion to its head and a confidence in the present and future which everyone disavowed in private, for as a matter of fact our hearths and homes at this time were ringing with universal curses. Let it be realized that at this moment no one escaped this dual attitude of mind, pessimism or gloomy forebodings marching side by side with submissive flattery; no one, I say, from the marshals, gorged with wealth and glory, so to speak, down to the veterans of '92 and '93.

"It applied even to friends of Napoleon's youth such as Lavalette, whom I used to see every day. At this time he seemed to be airing his vanity (and he had plenty) in telling a small group of politicians and society women to which I belonged that his attachment to the Emperor did not cloud his judgment or allow him to cherish any illusions.

"My readers should certainly know that all those with any pretentions to brains, and wanted it to be known,

took great pride in predicting the fall of the colossus. The only point on which there was any doubt was the fate of France. Would she survive or would her unity vanish with him ? The consequences of the great mistake of the kings were already making themselves felt ; the secret societies, which in their desperation they had encouraged, directed and inflamed men's minds throughout Germany, Belgium, Switzerland and Italy.

" No man was more alarmed than Napoleon at what the future had in store for Europe, or rather Christian civilization, thanks to monarchs of little vision.

" Immediately after Napoleon's fall his family, and particularly his brothers (as Joseph's ' Memoirs ' sufficiently prove), tried to represent him to the Liberals of Europe and the revolutionaries of France as a man who had been more or less forced into despotism by his inevitable struggle against the coalition of kings and aristocracies, and had intended to give the most liberal institutions to the nation as soon as his enemies were vanquished. This family, which was exceedingly ambitious and at bottom utterly unscrupulous, had realized only too well that it must place itself at the head of all reformers, even the wildest among them, if it was to have any chance of being restored.

" But whatever it might say, Napoleon's genius and nature made it impossible for him to share power with anyone. In his eyes unity was the indispensable condition of all strong government. Authority which was challenged, limited or controlled, seemed to him doomed to hesitation and deprived of those sudden inspirations to which he owed his own miracles, and also of that rapidity in execution and swift grasp of a situation which had been the principal factors of his success.

"At the time of which I am speaking—the time when his star was waning—do you know where his mind was searching for a remedy, what weakness he was accusing himself of, and what conditions he intended to create in future in the interests of stability? He was reproaching himself with having left the Legislative Body too much liberty and license in affairs (and allowing its composition to be too democratic), and accusing himself of permitting the Senate to become too important.

"All this came out clearly enough in what he dictated to me at the Trianon and instructed me to communicate to the legislators, as if to prepare them for death. During the past fifteen years he had, so to speak, *undone* the Revolution, bit by bit, exerting all his skill not to take a single step in the direction of counter-revolution. If victory returned to her fidelity to his standards, he meant to deprive institutions, and even thought itself, of every vestige of liberty or activity, either to help or hinder him.

"He had hastened to close the session of the Legislative Body immediately after the estimates were voted, and he was waiting to receive on his throne the address which the legislators were in the habit of presenting to him before dispersing, an address which in the present circumstances became an important matter. It was the President's duty to draft it and read it to him at the head of a large deputation, selected by lot, which hardly any member of the assembly failed to attend. If the Emperor was satisfied with the address, after replying to it, he descended from his throne and walked about among the deputies, exchanging a few words with several of them.

"The Grand Chamberlain, the Comte de Montesquieu, had been nominated by his colleagues to the list of

candidates for the presidency, and the Emperor lost no time in appointing him. In view of the known character and opinions of the Grand Chamberlain, this was proof of his future intentions towards this assembly. The Comte de Montesquieu belonged to one of the great families of the old nobility, the eldest son of the Marquis de Montesquieu, for a short time a general under the Republic, and who had emigrated to Switzerland to save his head.* . . . . . .

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certainly an intelligent man, his political opinions being those of the minority of the nobility in the Constituent Assembly.

"He had returned under the Directory, and in those days I often met him in Madame Pastoret's *salon*. Taciturn, frigid and to some extent cynical, he attracted my attention by his manners and fashion of speech in which dignity, moderation and good form triumphed over charm. He spoke little and always seemed to be looking out for an opportunity of startling his audience. I used to regard him as not a particularly striking, but a highly characteristic, relic of the *ancien régime*.†

"The Grand Chamberlain, his son, called Baron de Montesquieu before the Revolution, had received his title of Count from Napoleon. From a zealous chamberlain he became a devoted Grand Chamberlain. His wife was governess to the King of Rome. Loaded with favours of every kind, with some of the pride of his father, and aristocratic manners and habits, but no brains, in

* Two lines deleted.

† "This document is not the continuation or a portion of my 'Memoirs,' and I have written it in despair of ever having time to continue and complete them. But although, as I have already said, my main concern in these pages is to rescue from oblivion both my records and many of my conversations with the most extraordinary man of all time, I still think that I shall be forgiven if, *en passant*, I give some description of the men I knew best." (Count Mole's note).

Napoleon's eyes he was the model courtier minus the kindliness and charm. The Grand Chamberlain had a just horror of the crimes of the Revolution. He had suffered from them in person and family, and* . . . .

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he associated himself heart and soul with Napoleon's ideas. He was accused of flattering his master, and his only concern was loyally to serve and support him.

"His speech was all it ought to have been. '. . . The various peoples,' he said, of this vast Empire, whose manners and interests once kept them apart, are now competing in loyalty, zeal and devotion towards Your Majesty. Rejecting even the idea of a peace which could injure the national honour, no sacrifice will be too great to preserve the integrity of our soil, etc.' He then passed to the customary and obligatory review of the progress of agriculture, commerce and industry, and ended up more or less as follows: 'With our minds easy as to the present, for the future we no longer fear those turbulent minorities who, with division of authority and the uncertainty as to their rights, brought with them the dread of civil disorder as if at fixed intervals. . . . Thus that tutelary government which our ancestors loved so well is restored and strengthened.'

"It was impossible to enter the realm of fiction more frankly or to give a better reply to the man who made it his business brazenly to deny the evidence of the peril ahead, the imminence of the defection of the conquered peoples and his own allies, and who displayed more confidence, pride and composition the more he felt his position shaken.

"The Emperor replied: '. . . . The French have entirely justified my opinion of them. In a few years the

* Two lines deleted.

constitution of my Empire, that great work, will be completed and the whole existing structure consolidated. My only desire is to save my Empire from the laws of England. In any negotiations,' he added in a voice of thunder, 'its integrity shall never be in question. As soon as the cares of war leave us a moment of leisure, we shall call you and the leading personalities of our Empire to this capital to witness the coronation of the Empress and the King of Rome, our dearest son. The thought of this great solemnity, a political as well as a religious function, fills my heart. I shall hasten the time when I can fulfil the desires of France.'

"Only a man capable of anything, a man before whom all tremble, could have had the hardihood thus to assert in public the contrary of what everyone saw, knew and felt was the real truth. At the time Napoleon was making this speech there was not a man in France who was not convinced that all the countries incorporated in his Empire were on the point of betraying him or breaking away, not a man who did not think that he himself was on the high road to catastrophe and that his wife and son were much nearer exile than the splendours of their coronation.

"But the wounded lion was still feared. None would have dared to reply to Napoleon's words with an incredulous smile. France, stupefied and in the depths of gloom, turned her gaze on the eight hundred thousand foreigners on whom she vented her spite, and she did not know which to fear more, the despairing defence to which Napoleon invited her, or the humiliating clemency already promised her by those she had conquered and on whom her Emperor had inflicted innumerable outrages and sorrows.

"I was still upset and even angry at the trick which had been played on me in '*Le Moniteur*.' Napoleon

took liberties innumerable with the self-respect of men on whom he thought he could count. Hitherto he had shown me more consideration than anyone else and spared a certain sensitiveness he had observed and which whispered to him : ' In these judicial families, the greater and higher the hand raised against them, the greater is their determination not to put up with insult.' I had been to the Tuileries for the first time to be present at the reception of the Legislative Body. It seemed to me that the members received me coldly and I thought that as the Emperor moved about among them he made full use of those charms and that kind of *coquetterie* in which he excelled.

" I had stopped availing myself of my much envied right of appearing in the Empress's drawing-room in the evening, but as a Councillor of State and Director-General of Roads and Bridges it was my duty occasionally to go to the Emperor's levées. I was there on March 29, five days after the address : it was the first time he had seen me since my alleged speech had appeared in ' *Le Moniteur*.' The levée was later than usual. Napoleon seemed pre-occupied and in a hurry. On seeing me he called out : ' Are your works beginning again ? ' Then he passed on, made some remark to someone else, and dismissed us.

" I went home and was seated at dinner with my family when an orderly officer came in and said to me : ' M. le Comte, the Emperor wants you.' I knew that the Emperor would never wait. Perhaps he was the only man on earth who never left a moment idle. He never knew that unconscious evaporation of time which is not without its charm, though it leads to the dissipation of so many precious gifts. If he slept it was only because he recognized the need for sleep and because it renewed the energies he would require later. So I jumped into my

carriage the moment it was ready for me, telling myself that while he was waiting for me he would have started something else which he would not interrupt to receive me, so that I might be kept waiting indefinitely. It turned out otherwise. I was ushered in as soon as I arrived. As the chamberlain opened the door of the study I saw the Emperor looking through the window with the brightest of faces and that kindly half-smile I have never seen on anyone else.

" ' Hallo ! M. Molé,' he said, in that bantering tone he sometimes assumed, more by design than otherwise, ' I haven't seen you since you harangued the legislators. Were you pleased with them ? '

" ' Certainly not more than they were with me, Sire. I talked to them of the budget at a very grave moment, with the result that I had nothing to tell or teach them which could well be to their liking.'

" Napoleon had obviously made up his mind not to admit that I had anything to complain about, and he resumed in a very calm and gentle voice :

" ' I understand. You are right : they were not pleased with your speech. Why ? ' he added with the most naïve air.

" ' In particular, Sire, because they thought they saw their own extinction in one of my remarks. The Emperor knows, of course, that the Legislative Body is composed of men who attach great importance to their position, and more especially its revenues. At first they thought that such a remark could only have its origin in the Emperor himself. But since they saw Your Majesty receive them so graciously a few days ago and, so to speak, send them away until the end of the war makes it possible for us to think of the coronation of the Empress and the King of Rome, they have no further doubt that the remark was

the expression of my personal opinion, and the coldness with which they received me has all but changed to rage. At any rate that was the emotion expressed on their faces at the Tuileries the other day, and it was because I anticipated this would happen that I decided to face their displeasure and be present at their reception by the Emperor.'

" Napoleon looked annoyed when I said ' it was because I anticipated this would happen. . . .'

" ' But I have never disavowed you,' he said in a tone in which there was more embarrassment than anger. ' On the contrary, in my reply to the address, I repeated all you had said. I don't know whether the police are mixed up in this and have done something to calm their fears. Personally I have never changed my mind and always spoken in the same sense as yourself.'

" ' The one thing certain is that after their farewell reception by Your Majesty they were quite satisfied when they left.'

" ' I had my reasons for treating them well : they had done all I wanted them to do, and it was only just and politic that they should be pleased with me when they went.'

" ' But we must make no mistake, Sire. They are dispersing full of anxiety, and that sentiment is shared by the whole State.'

" ' What ! Are they afraid ? Do they fear the outcome of the war ? '

" ' At the present moment, Sire, the anxiety of which you are speaking is shared by the whole of France, but it is not that kind of anxiety I wanted to mention to Your Majesty. All the political bodies in the State consider themselves menaced by the changes you are contemplating, changes they suspect from your own words of late or those

of the orators who have spoken in your name. The Senate, the Council of State, the Legislative Body and the Court of Appeal are all in doubt whether they are to continue, and are wondering whether changes in our institutions will not seriously injure their interests or their functions.'

"The Emperor was whistling as he listened to me; he walked up and down, making an effort to conceal his impatience with me and the fact that his thoughts were elsewhere.

"'Yes,' he said, 'I knew that. Anyhow, that has always been my method. Prolonged suspense has one good thing about it—that when the blow falls it is found to be far less than was feared, and something which a few months before would not have been tolerated without protest is received almost as a blessing. In any case I have spoken very highly of the present members of the bodies you mention, and whatever I may do all the privileges they enjoy will be secured to them for life. As for the Legislative Body, a collection of mediocrities, nobodies and paupers, I shall certainly have to change its personnel if I keep it.'

"'Yet it should not be forgotten, Your Majesty, that when you shortly take command of your armies you will leave all these high functionaries worried and discontented behind you.'

"'What can they do? Don't they think me necessary? Are they not equally afraid* of the Republic and the Bourbons? On the other hand they do not fear a minority which would enable them to recover their ascendancy and preserve and strengthen all those institutions of which they make good use; a minority which would restore to everyone the hope of securing the triumph of his own

* "All these conversations are given textually, a fact which explains the frequent use of the same word—'afraid' for example, by Napoleon." (Count Molé's note.)

opinions, of playing a great part and especially of recovering a personal importance which I allow no man to attain. I am quite certain that all these chatterers in the Council of State whom I am leaving behind me—though I can stop their chatter whenever I like—would then throw over the traces and be only too glad to cut a big figure. I ask you, honestly, isn't this regency a good idea, because it assures a future after my death? Believe me, all the parties will rally round it for fear of the Republic or the Bourbons.'

"'From all these points of view, Sire, the regency offers guarantees. It opens up a future, but if it makes the dynasty more secure and assures the stability of the State it makes Your Majesty less necessary: there will be less fear of the catastrophe of your death. The nation itself is drunk with glory, but as tired of war as it was tired of anarchy on the Eighteenth Brumaire, and seeing that instead of political opinions it has only one desire and need—peace abroad and tranquillity at home—it will readily accept the regency, which will give it both. For Your Majesty must realize that the Government then in existence will make peace at any price, because peace will have become indispensable.'

"'If the Government then existing,' interrupted the Emperor warmly, 'whatever it is, whether Bourbon or republican, agreed to France's returning to her old frontiers, such a peace would be less humiliating and, therefore, more acceptable to it than to me. I owe my all to my glory. If I sacrifice it I cease to be. It is from my glory that I hold all my rights. I'm not going to cast a stain upon it of my own accord. Posterity will judge me, and if I brought this nation, which is so anxious for peace and tired of war, a peace on terms which would make me blush personally, it would soon lose all its confidence in

me ; you would see my prestige destroyed and my ascendancy lost, and the French, who have admired and perhaps feared me so much, would revile me more than they have reviled any of their governments. I hold my crown from the nation and my sword : I bear it on my head, but I am and shall always be ready to give it back rather than let it be besmirched. The disaster which has just befallen me in Russia is terrible : I make no secret of it. It is certainly a blow to my glory, but it will have served to make my dynasty more secure. I will compare it to a storm, the fury of which shakes the tree to its very roots and leaves it still more firmly fixed in the soil from which it has failed to tear it.'

" There was one moment in which the Emperor seemed to me moved to real grief : it was when he said : ' It is a blow to my glory.'

" ' No, Sire,' I cried, 'your glory will never suffer from that. It would have been incomplete if it had never stood the test of adversity. Posterity would never have seen the measure of your great spirit if it had not seen it in misfortune.'

" ' Anyhow,' he continued, ' the nation has shown an excellent spirit ; there has been grumbling, but it has accepted the sacrifices demanded of it with admirable resignation. Three hundred and fifty thousand men and a hundred thousand horses have been raised in less than three months. No modern state has produced such resources and made such efforts. France is so rich that they will never exhaust her, and she would do much more if her territory were threatened.'

" ' The nation, Sire, certainly has just given proofs innumerable of your unchallengeable ascendancy over it. Public opinion was against the war which has brought us so much misfortune. The average man knows nothing of the calculations of high politics ; he could not realize that

the war with Russia was the conclusion of a great plan, the object of which was to assure the greatness and prosperity of France by closing the continent to England if she refused to make peace. The French cried *en masse :* " What are we going to do in Russia ? " Hence the fact that of all the wars waged by Your Majesty this one could least afford to fail.'

" ' That's true, perfectly true ; I cannot say too often that I have been satisfied with the nation. I know it ; I know what it says about me, that it fears me more than it likes me and would at first regard the news of my death as a relief. But, believe me, that is much better than if it liked me without fearing me. The French people, from the Gauls down to the present time, is the nation which has always had the greatest need of government, and therefore of fear of those who govern it. It likes war and sovereigns who make war. I want to make peace, not so much because we are tired of war as because blood has been flowing too long, and it is time we stopped. But I shall make peace without any loss to the territory of my Empire ; I shall not even cede the Hanseatic cities ; I have no fear whatever for the coming campaign and what may happen afterwards. If I had, I should tell you so. But I am sure of beating the Russians : they have no infantry. The defection of Prussia will enable me to seek compensation. It is very fortunate that she has turned against me. I will fix the frontiers of my Empire at the Oder—where they were destined to be fixed some day—and I shall be in a position to offer my enemies and allies honourable and adequate compensation.'

" ' Sire, you alone can possess the secret of your strength and resources, but I cannot conceal from you that your confidence is far from being universally shared. Many people already see the Russians on the Rhine ;

every day alarming rumours are circulated : at one time you are about to call up the second ban, at another Austria is declaring war on you, and these rumours, which are, so to speak, protected by public uneasiness, are spread about and repeated in all quarters without your police being able to prevent it.'

" ' The news of the calling up of the second ban has caused a salutary depression so that the new levy on the first ban, which Prussia's declaration of war will compel me to demand, will be accepted all the more quietly. As for Austria, I do not think she will ever declare herself against me, and her behaviour is sufficient proof that the best act in my political career was my marriage. You may have heard that the Bourbons are stirring, but you'll never guess how I found out. Just imagine : Austria learned before I did that the Comte de Lille had issued a proclamation which revealed fresh hope ; she has been far more alarmed than I should have been, and through her envoy at Kaliscz has enquired of the Emperor of Russia if he recognized this proclamation, and what it meant. Alexander hastened to reassure Austria by disavowing the proclamation and stating that no one despised the Bourbons more than he did, or was less inclined to revive their cause. He added that he also had no personal dislike of the Emperor Napoleon, that I had determined to make an unjust war upon him, and that he would always be ready to make peace on certain conditions. Here in Paris it was the Defermons, the ex-Conventionals and revolutionaries who gave me the alarm. Thus at home it is the Jacobins, and abroad Austria, who do sentry duty for me against the Bourbons.' (The Emperor laughed uproariously as he said this.)

" ' Sire,' I replied coldly, ' I knew nothing whatever of that proclamation. I only heard yesterday that the

Comte de Lille was dead, which seemed to me a disaster to his cause, as by his death any pretended rights to the Crown pass to the most unpopular and perhaps the most reactionary member of his family.'

"'What,' cried the Emperor, 'you mean to say you knew nothing of what I have just told you? Yet it would appear that there is some slight movement of opinion in favour of the Bourbons at the present moment. Some men's minds have turned towards them. The revolutionaries were alarmed and came to warn me that the Faubourg Saint-Germain was stirring.'

"'It's impossible for it to move, Sire, though probable that it will talk. It must be expected that for a long time to come the established Government will not suffer a reverse or experience a failure without reviving the hopes of the Bourbons and their followers.'

"'No doubt! It is not very long since the Stuarts gave up the game. In any case their proclamation is a clumsy affair; it is bound to make even the High Chancellor think that he will be hung when they come back. It is the Comte de Lille all over. One can recognize his "literary man's" style, full of antitheses and rhetoric. It is aimed particularly at the nobles around me: he promises to confirm all of them in their rights and offices. But for the first time he won't guarantee the validity of the sale of national property. All he says is that it is no business of his. The Opposition in England have also taken umbrage at this document. They asked the ministers openly in Parliament if they knew of it, and the ministers disavowed it, stating that it had been published without their knowledge and that whatever happened they would never think of making the restoration of the House of Bourbon the object or result of the war. I showed the proclamation to the High Chancellor and Talleyrand, who

both thought it clumsy. I rather thought of publishing it in "*Le Moniteur*," along with the debates in the English Parliament, but they thought, and ultimately I agreed with them, that it was better to say nothing about it.'

"'I should have been of the same opinion, Sire.'

"'How can you have failed to hear of all this?'

"'Sire, I have already told Your Majesty that nothing but the report of the Comte de Lille's death had reached me.'

"'Yes, that rumour has been current also. It was another scheme of the Bourbons for calling public attention to themselves and finding out how much they are remembered. In any case I cannot think that if the proclamation had been more widely known it would have caused any great sensation. In France too many interests are opposed to the return of these princes.' Then, after a moment's reflection: 'There is only the Orléans . . . but I'm not afraid of him. The Duc d'Orléans has principles which would make him refuse a crown he would regard as usurped. As for all the rest, no party would have them back. In short, the nation will not recall and will never accept a member of that dynasty whose head it slew, but out of sheer weariness it might let one be forced upon it. The strongest barrier against their restoration, or that of the Republic, would be a good aristocracy, solidly established and genuinely interested in the preservation of the new dynasty. But where am I to look for its ingredients? It is always to be feared that at the bottom of their hearts the old nobility are sighing for their old kings. Besides, the new peers have no faith in themselves and hate the old ones. There are families which it is impossible to ennoble. How many colonels are brothers of ladies' maids?'

"'You know, Sire, that one of your Councillors of State has a brother who is a crossing sweeper in Paris.'

"NAPOLEON (*plunged in gloom*): 'Well, well, *mon cher*, my task isn't easy. Time is a factor I cannot make up. I can only proceed slowly towards my goal; that's still the best way of getting there. In twenty years' time I shall be in a position to think of creating institutions. Meanwhile we must go ahead at top speed. The regency will provide for the needs of the moment, the dangers my absence might involve.'

"'Sire, it will certainly be extremely important for Your Majesty to leave the Government in the hands of the Empress while you are away.'

"'I shall certainly do so. I want her to preside over the Senate and the Council of State. I'm leaving the High Chancellor with her, as everyone has confidence in him.'

"'And he deserves it; he is the perfect public man, has grown old in our storms, and is full of experience and moderation.'

"'You can add his devotion to me. Then there is Talleyrand, the natural enemy of the Republic and the Bourbons. His interest is a much surer guarantee of his loyalty than his character.'

"'He is a man of high intelligence and very resourceful; he will play a great part when you are gone, as it is generally thought that he alone could negotiate a peace.'

"'His reputation is partly due to luck, for it is that, rather than his own talents, which enabled him to negotiate and sign several peace treaties. I assure you positively that I could not truthfully say that he had been a great help to me or provided me with those expedients which betray a really inventive mind and reveal genuine cleverness. As a matter of fact I do not think that, as you said, he is a man of high intelligence, much less a great man: we have only to look at his life. By birth and status he was one of the leading lights among the nobility and

clergy, yet he did everything in his power to bring about their downfall. When he came back from America after the Terror he completed his degradation by attaching himself publicly to a brainless old prostitute. At the time of the Concordat, notwithstanding his opposition, I tried to drag him out of this slime by asking the Pope for a cardinal's hat for him; I all but succeeded. He was always opposed to my doing so and, in spite of me, to the scandal of all Europe, he married his dreadful mistress,* although he could not even hope to have children by her. There is certainly no society man who has stolen so much †; he hasn't a sou and I'm obliged to support him out of my privy purse and am still paying his debts.'

"'The Emperor will at least admit that his conversation is full of seduction, charm and fascination.'

"'Oh, yes! That's his strong point, and he knows it well, but him apart, who do you think would become influential men if I were not there?'

"After a short pause, and looking me full in the face: 'Fouché? He still turns pale at the name of a Bourbon, and will be at daggers drawn with the Republic for ever. What about Regnault, in virtue of his gifts?'

"'M. Regnault, Sire, is in his real element in the Council of State. In a really grave crisis men such as he have no place and are incapable of anything.'

"The Emperor appeared tired. 'That's enough,' he said, 'we must go. I will see you again before long.'

"Our conversation had lasted more than an hour."

At this point the manuscript ends.

* The reference is to Madame Grand, whom Talleyrand married. But according to other historians Talleyrand would not have married her unless he had been urged and in fact forced to do so by Napoleon. It will be seen that Count Molé's account is quite different.

† The word "stolen" used by Napoleon, is certainly exaggeration, due to his violent dislike of Talleyrand.

CHAPTER IX

Lying rumours about Count Molé.—The Duke of Vicenza.—The Emperor's confidence in these two statesmen.—The Emperor's speech at the reception of the Legislative Body, on January 1, 1814.—Count Molé accompanies the Empress Marie Louise to Blois, and returns to Paris after the fall of the Emperor.—Enthusiastic welcome given by the people to Louis XVIII on his return.—Count Molé lives in retirement after the first restoration.—The return from Elba.—Count Molé's conversation with Cambacérès.—On the Emperor's return he sends for Count Molé, and offers him successively the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Interior.—Count Molé resumes office as Director-General of Roads and Bridges.—The address of the Council of State.—M. Molé refuses to sign it.—He explains his action to Napoleon. —His intervention in favour of Pasquier.

CHAPTER IX

THE year 1813 continued to be as disastrous to Napoleon as 1812 had been. Leipsic followed Moscow. After the battle was lost the Emperor returned to Paris without an army for the second time. The defections which had been latent since the Russian campaign were now confirmed and others were only waiting until the crash became a certainty. The Legislative Body itself, notwithstanding its servility hitherto and the fact that it was still afraid of a power which was already tottering, plucked up courage to offer a semblance of resistance to Napoleon's demands for men and money, though the effort was a very short one. Count Molé's rapid rise to fame had raised up many enemies against him, and many others were filled with envy. The latter, with the object of injuring him when the Emperor's downfall became a *fait accompli*, spread a rumour that in a Cabinet Council, of which there was a good deal of talk at this time, Count Molé had suggested punishing his opponents, at the head of which de Flaugergues, Lainé and de Biran had placed themselves.

Count Molé formally denied it. It was neither his habit, nor consistent with his character, to attack behind their backs men with whom he was on good and often cordial terms. "Neither the suggestion," he writes, "nor the threat of such a step fell from anyone's lips, not even Napoleon's."

At the time he appointed Count Molé Chief Judge, Napoleon had placed the Duke of Vicenza at the head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Amongst all the desertions, which became more numerous every day, these two statesmen remained unshakeably loyal to the man who had appointed them, and though they foresaw the inevitable catastrophe they continued to serve him with the same devotion.

After his defeat at Leipsic, Napoleon, still confident in his star, wanted to continue the struggle, and was again proposing to withdraw the frontiers of his Empire to the Oder. Count Molé and the Duke of Vicenza did not hesitate frequently to advise him to call a halt in his conquests, abandon his schemes for domination, and while there was still time make an honourable peace which might leave France even more than her natural frontiers. Although he did not take their advice—for he was a man who had never tolerated the slightest criticism—he listened pleasantly while they expounded their views, and in the serious crisis he was then passing through he naturally turned to them, knowing that he could count both on their devotion and their wisdom.

The mute dissatisfaction with Napoleon, and fear of the dangers ahead into which the Emperor's insane policy was leading France, produced a current of public opinion which demanded a more liberal constitution, making it possible to control imperial policy and curb the unrealizable and all but mad ambitions of Napoleon. At the end of 1813 the Legislative Body made itself the interpreter of this trend of thought and appointed a committee which drew up a report sketching the outlines of a constitution and recapitulating the abuses to be reformed. The report was presented to the Emperor, who was extremely angry with it. At the reception of the Legislative Body on the 1st January following, he did not conceal his displeasure.

"The Emperor," writes Count Molé,* "received the

* Diary.

Legislative Body. Standing among them he told them all he thought in the following terms :

" ' So you think you are going to save France, gentlemen. I am sorry for her if she has no other saviours. Eleven-twelfths of you are good Frenchmen, I know, but it only requires a handful of party men to lead an assembly astray and drag it towards a goal it has not contemplated. The Revolution should have taught you, but experience glances off men : it never instructs or warns them. Where are the rash instigators of that Revolution now ? They died on the scaffold. Will M. Lainé tell me where Vergniaud is, or all the Girondist deputies ? They died in the same fashion. If I had permitted it, you would have begun everything we have seen all over again. The guillotine would have once more made our public squares a place of blood. Did you think you were going to make another Louis XVI of me ? Do you know what Louis XVI's mistake was, the mistake which ruined him ? It was in accepting the constitution of 1791.

" ' If the day comes when the nation wants a constitution which I think prevents me from governing, I shall hand it back my crown. I would rather be one of the sovereign people than remain on a disgraced and impotent throne. In your report you separate the throne from the nation ; the same language was used in 1789. You must know that the throne without the nation is simply four pieces of wood covered with a piece of velvet. The nation is in the throne and the throne in the nation ; otherwise there is no monarchy.

" ' You call yourselves the representatives of the people, but you are not ; the people, the primary assemblies, have not chosen you. There are no representatives in France except myself. Five million carried me successively into

the Consulate, the Consulate for life and then the Empire. If there is an authority or individual in France who can say as much, let him come forward. He can be my rival. I do not hold my crown through my ancestors, but by the will of the nation which gave it me. In your report you have the audacity to reproach me with my misfortunes: you talk about them almost ironically. Adversity has never depressed me: I have borne it nobly and I shall never give greater proof of my devotion to France than in consenting to remain alive after the battle of Leipsic. In calling you together I thought I should again provide my enemies with the awe-inspiring spectacle of a great nation rallied as one man to defend itself. I thought you would understand how I feel in my heart and that you would console me. I have been mistaken: all you have done is to try and make my position worse.

"'I am making great sacrifices for the security of my subjects; for them I am sacrificing my personal ambitions and the memories of my glory, but with me nothing counts when their welfare is at stake. To you France will owe the loss of more than one province, and the enemy, relying on our internal dissensions, will become more exacting in the question of peace terms. If this emotional people is ever tempted to reproach me with it I shall summon you to its tribunal, for you will have had more influence on the negotiations than a lost battle in the plains of Champagne.

"'You talk of a constitution and abuses requiring reform when the enemy is on our soil and our brothers are calling you to their defence. If I had been returning happy and triumphant it would have been noble and perhaps just to address me as you have. Posterity will judge you; I am keeping the report of your committee, and if in your departmental work you try to mislead

public opinion about your conduct I shall denounce you to the tribunal of the nation by publishing your report with notes in "*Le Moniteur*."

"'I have not refused to hear your complaints; I had instructed you to enumerate them in a list of grievances discussed in secret committee. I had verified the facts and commissioned the Councillors of State to find the remedy in concert with you. But that could not satisfy you. It was not the public good you were seeking, but advertisement and popularity. Some of you, such as M. Lainé, were perhaps concealing more advanced and guilty designs. You will receive proof that he has been in touch with England and instigated by M. Desèze in Paris.

"'As regards everything else, within three months I shall have made peace and our enemies will have been driven from our territory, or I shall be dead.'"

The violence of these words shows how far Napoleon, who had kept himself firmly under control for so long, was now unable to master his emotions. Irritated or enraged at the obstacles in his path, he flung himself at them without thinking for a moment that he would annihilate himself. Count Molé's portrait of him is perfectly lifelike. The Emperor knew nothing of the impossible; he thought he could smash his way through all barriers, and lost all idea of the limitations of human power. It was only on the field of battle that he was to resume his self-possession and recover the finest inspirations of his genius in his campaign in France.

The night Napoleon left Paris to take command of his army, Count Molé had a long conversation with him at the Tuileries. He was alone with the Emperor until two o'clock in the morning, and only left him as he was entering his carriage.

Unfortunately the report of this conversation, if Count Molé ever committed it to paper, is missing. Much has been said about it, but the various accounts which have been given of it can only be invented. As is said in the note to which we have already referred, so far as we know, the statesman did not communicate a word of it.

The supreme effort was destined to be useless, and in spite of the resources of a strategy which will always remain a model, Napoleon could not arrest the march of the allies on Paris.

The Government had to leave the capital. The Empress Marie Louise, with the Regency Council and the high officers of State, went to Blois. Count Molé followed her there. While desertions were increasing fast before the menace of an imminent and certain catastrophe, he considered it a point of honour to remain at his post, in accordance with his ancestral traditions of fidelity to his plighted word.

Count Molé remained with the Empress to the last, and returned to Paris only after the Emperor had relieved him of his oath, in order that he might, as Napoleon's letter ran, " render further services to his country."

When he arrived in Paris Count Molé found himself under that sort of stigma which in 1814 was the fate of all who had held high office under the expiring regime. He lived in retirement for the whole of the First Restoration, looking on from his retreat at the difficulties and occasional mistakes of the Government of Louis XVIII, who was received with joy on his return, but was destined to see his popularity wane, thanks to the lack of moderation displayed by the ultras, and especially to the attacks of the Emperor's partisans.

" The year 1814," writes Count Molé, " had shown how powerless the restored throne was to dominate and curb

all the passions and forces in league to overturn it. But of all the weapons of war invented by the various oppositions, the most terrible was that which consisted of representing the House of Bourbon, prescribed or forgotten by France, as having been brought back and forced upon her by eight hundred thousand foreign bayonets.

"Of course it is true that if Napoleon had not been vanquished by these bayonets the Bourbons would not have returned. But the lie, the clumsy and patent lie, is in the words 'forced upon.' My evidence cannot be suspect, for I was one of the younger generation, who had known the Bourbons only in history, and while loathing the crimes of which their princes had been the victims, as well as the revolution which had overthrown them, regarded their return as impossible.

"Yet I declare here, without the slightest hesitation and before God and my honour, that when I returned from Blois, whither I had had to follow the Empress Marie Louise, I was absolutely astounded to observe how genuine, universal and enthusiastic was the welcome which every class in Paris had given, and was still giving Louis XVIII and his family. It might have been said that all eyes were simultaneously turned to him and all hearts had been touched by one irresistible emotion at the same time. Carnot himself, in that famous memoir written during his exile after the Hundred Days, and in which he has the audacity to defend the murder of Louis XVI, admits that the Restoration was received with feelings of universal enthusiasm."

From the depths of his little island Napoleon closely followed the course of events in France, hoping and waiting for a favourable opportunity of returning. The opportunity soon presented itself.

On March 6, 1815, it was announced that the Emperor had landed at Cannes.* The ministers and princes were insanely confident or frightened out of their wits. Time was wasted in conferences, and the measures taken were all faulty or inadequate. The King was persuaded that safety was to be found only in the Chambers, and the latter seized the Government. They demanded the dismissal of the ministers as soon as the crisis was over. They wanted Lanjuinais as Chancellor and were offered Cambacérès. For the Ministry of the Interior they hovered between d'Argenson, Chateaubriand and Benjamin Constant. Clark and Louis were retained. In the midst of all this vacillation Napoleon continued his triumphal march across France. In the night of the 19th the King took his departure with the princes and ministers, and in the evening of the 20th the Emperor arrived at the Tuileries.

That morning Count Molé had called on Cambacérès and had a long talk with him.

"Well, Monsieur, more stirring events," Cambacérès said to him.

"Yes, Monseigneur, and perhaps Your Highness knows more than I as to their causes."

"No, indeed, as I've often told you, my only desire is to end my days in peace and no one will ever find me doing anything to disturb it. The Duc de Rovigo has just come to me for orders; I had none to give him, for the Emperor has sent me no instructions. It is for you ministers to seize the Government during the interregnum if you think it wise, but a high dignitary like me has nothing to do."

"I do not regard myself as a minister of the Emperor, unless he reappoints me, and it is my desire to discuss

* The Return from Elba. (Count Molé's diary).

my position with Your Highness which, more than anything else, has brought me here. Your Highness may remember what I said at Blois a year ago. The Revolution, and recent events especially, have weighed so heavily on me that I feel myself worn out before my time. The Emperor knows my devotion to him, but I'm not strong enough now to enter public life again. Will you be good enough, Monseigneur, to help me in securing his consent to my retirement. If you do, you will never give me more cogent proof of your kindness and friendship."

"I'm sorry to find you in this frame of mind, *mon cher*, as I regard you as destined to play the leading part here. From the moment you became the Emperor's minister you must have realized you had burned your boats. The Emperor likes you and values your abilities, particularly your judgment; he has confidence in you, you cannot think of retiring."

"Monseigneur, my mind is made up; I am without ambition and my health is destroyed, so please support my suggestion. You will never do me a greater service."

"Wait a minute, *mon cher*. You know how straightforward I am: I promise to give the Emperor a faithful report of our conversation, but if he asks my advice I shall tell him he ought to keep you. Your retirement would have a bad effect, and besides you can be more useful than anyone else, because of the confidence the Emperor reposes in you, and I might even say your ascendancy over his mind. There are truths that you alone can tell him and things that you alone can prevent."

Various people came in turn to see Cambacérès, and interrupted the conversation. When they had gone Count Molé continued and renewed his plea. He obtained no other reply, however, and withdrew. At eight o'clock in

the evening he sent Cambacérès the letter he had written to the Emperor, begging him to permit him to retire. He implored him to give it to Napoleon and again appealed to their conversation of the morning.

"At half-past eleven," continues Count Molé, "as I was about to get into bed, the door opened, a man came in and told me that the Emperor wanted to see me at once. I hastily dressed and went to the Tuileries. I walked through the court in which a large number of troops was encamped, and the silence of the night was broken only by the songs, or shouts of '*Vive l'Empereur*,' of the men who could not sleep. In an ante-room I found de Vertillac, Daru and Montalivet; the latter looked very depressed. He came to me and asked me if the Emperor had sent for me; on my replying in the affirmative he told me to go into the next room. There I found all the new ministers who were waiting to take the oath. The High Chancellor was talking to Regnier. I went up to him.

"'Have you sent on my letter, Monseigneur?'

"'Yes, Monsieur,' he answered drily. 'Regnier went off and I took his place.'

"'And what did the Emperor say?'

"'He said this,' said the High Chancellor: '"I must lose no time in appointing my ministers. Let's start with the Chief Judge: there can be no difficulty about that. It's Molé." "On the contrary, there are a good many difficulties," I replied. "Molé is unwilling: here is a letter he has asked me to give you. He called on me this morning to explain his reasons; he says that he is ill and tired, and needs a rest." "Rubbish!" said the Emperor, "he's too young to need a rest; he has never liked the Ministry of Justice. You must take it over yourself and I'll give him another." So I have you to thank for being decked out for this new rôle, although I am worn out

(and had come to tell him so), and all I want is rest. I certainly need it far more than you.'

"At that moment I was sent for and went in to the Emperor. He gave me his hand in the same kind old way and embraced me. I was much moved.

"'It is an unhoped-for delight to see you again, Sire!'

"'You were not expecting me, I imagine?'

"'None but Your Majesty can work miracles like these, Sire! This is certainly the most glorious page of your record.'

"'I've only had to show myself to triumph once more: they have made so many mistakes and alienated the nation and army to such a degree that all the troops sent against me came over to me, and if I had liked I could have arrived in Paris with 30,000 armed peasants behind me. Don't believe a word of the alleged plot; if there was any plot it was not on my behalf, and I give you my word that I came here with no guarantee of success beyond my confidence in the feeling of the nation and the prestige of my name. In any case I was not in touch with anyone. What is your idea of the King's character?'

"'Everything he has done, Sire, gives grounds for thinking that he is good-natured, just and not without tact or courage.'

"'Yes, he is Louis XVI with less candour and more brains; but how on earth could he have selected such ministers? Why didn't he prevent the handful of great nobles who returned with him from making so many mistakes? Nothing has astonished me more on my return to France than the hatred of priests and aristocrats which I have observed; it seems to me as universal and violent as at the beginning of the Revolution. If I had not come back the nobility would ultimately have been massacred.

I have come to save it a second time. But what about yourself? I hear you don't want to be Chief Judge.'

"'Sire, a ministry is beyond my powers now. Recent events have affected me so greatly that my health is almost ruined, and I am incapable of continuous work.'

"'You have certainly changed. I find you all changed, and in fact I alone seem to be in good health.'

"'That is because you are as much ahead of us physically as mentally, Sire.'

"'Do you feel equal to a great and important task I want to entrust you with?'

"'What task, Sire?'

"'I want to make you Foreign Minister.'

"'I must remind Your Majesty that I have never been trained for that office; I have never been known abroad, and my appointment will be a mystery in the eyes of Europe. I think the situation requires that Your Majesty should present the Powers with a man known to all the Cabinets.'

"'Yes, but personally I think you would be an excellent choice; you bear a great name, you can talk and make others talk, you are very well informed and I have often been struck by your letters. I assure you, you are particularly well fitted for the post.'

"'I assure you I do not think so, Sire, and it would not be long before you regretted having chosen me. The state of your relations with Europe does not permit you to select as your minister a man whose apprenticeship is still before him.'

"'I'll help you; we will manage the ministry between us. Besides, let us run through the list of any others I could contemplate, and see if they have any more qualifications than yourself. Otto has no brains. Laforest is too corrupt, and Caulaincourt lacks vision and general knowledge.'

"'He has been an ambassador, Sire, and is believed to be a sincere peace-lover. Your Majesty cannot make a wiser choice at the present moment.'

"'There are drawbacks. He is Grand Equerry and we must not allow such an accumulation of dignities and offices. What a terrible nuisance this shortage of men suited for high office is! I have sent Fouché to the Police: do you think it's a good choice?'

"'I think no one else could be better suited for the office under present conditions, Sire.'

"'Do you believe in an Orléanist Party?'

"'There would be, Sire, if the Duke of Orléans would allow it, but that is exactly what he will not do.'

"'The Duc de Rovigo was too unpopular; the Ministry of Justice will suit Cambacérès very well, particularly at first. Davoust is rather hard, but I had no one else. I don't know whom to choose for the Interior; it seems to be impossible to have Montalivet back.'

"'It is certain that public opinion would be adverse to him.'

"'Regnier is too corrupt and, worse than that, is too well known to be.'

"'What about M. Daru?'

"'He talks too much, and anyhow I must keep him for the War Material Department, which he knows so well. You make a start by accepting the Foreign Ministry, and we'll find a Minister of the Interior later on.'

"'Sire, if all the reasons I have given Your Majesty seem inadequate, will you allow me to repeat the best of all, my poor state of health. I shall have to devote practically my whole attention to it, and I expect to go and take the waters when the season comes. If rest and treatment give me back my strength I shall come and offer it to Your Majesty.'

"'The ministry in question is the least tiring of all; it is all done by talk; you have only to make others talk and know when to be silent, and it will not prevent you from taking the waters. All you will have to do is to take three clerks with you and your couriers will do the rest. Do you believe in the existence of a Republican Party?'

"'Yes, Sire, and I think it is a very powerful party. For some time its ranks have been swollen by all the enemies the Bourbons have made, and that middle class which has become so powerful and has once more been alienated by the tactlessness and contempt of the nobility.'

"'The Revolution is beginning again. It is impossible to realize all the injury these unhappy princes have inflicted on France, without suspecting it. They have reopened all the questions that were decided, and I find all the old parties and hatreds brought back to life. They have restored to liberal ideas and the principles of the early days of the Revolution all the vigour they had lost. So the moment I disembarked I announced that I intended to give a constitution more liberal than the Bourbons' charter, and the nation would be consulted first. Have you heard of my decree summoning the assemblies of the *Champ de Mai?*'

"'Yes Sire.'

"'Thirty thousand persons will meet' (with a laugh). 'What a wonderful sight! Anyone can be a member. Before I came back I also wanted to get rid of the *Chambres* and the *émigrés*, so that once I was back I had only to forget them. Well, Molé, have you made up your mind?'

"'Sire, the more I think about it, the more do I find myself unfitted to come up to your present ideas of me.'

"'All right, I don't want to appoint the Minister for

Foreign Affairs to-night. I should like you to have the night to think it over ; come back to-morrow morning.'

" ' At what time, Sire ? '

" ' When you like ; I shall not go out.'

" The Emperor opened the door for me himself and I returned to the ministers, who supposed I was their colleague. The High Chancellor asked me if I had preferred Foreign Affairs or the Interior.

" ' Neither, Monseigneur.'

" He was amazed.

" As I was going out Fouché called me back : ' Where are you going ? Don't you know we are all about to take the oath ? ' ' I have no oath to take to-night ; the Emperor has told me to return to-morrow, and I'm going to bed.' ' The Emperor asked you to come back to-morrow apparently to do some work with him. I tell you we are all just about to take the oath. Ask Maret.' ' I repeat that it does not concern me and I'm going to bed.' I saw all the ministers looking at me in great astonishment, and out I went.

" At midday next morning I went back to the Emperor and had some difficulty in making my way through the crowd which was thronging his apartments. After a long wait I succeeded in letting him know that I was there. He sent for me at once. He was in his study with Princess Hortense.

" ' Have you thought it over ? '

" ' Yes, Sire, and my reflections have confirmed me in my opinion that I could give no better proof of my gratitude for Your Majesty's high mark of confidence than by not accepting it.'

" ' As you wish,' he said, in a cold and irritated tone.

" He walked a short distance away, then came back towards me.

" ' What about the Interior ? '

" ' Sire, the Interior would be a greater burden and still more beyond my strength.'

" ' Why, you're lazy ! '

" He gave me a friendly little tap on the cheek. Then, in a colder tone : ' Will you go back to Roads and Bridges ? I haven't given it yet.'

" ' With pleasure, Sire. I am so used to that branch of the administration that I could manage it without much work.'

" ' Well, see if it will suit you. I never force anyone.'

" ' I accept Roads and Bridges, Sire.'

" ' All right ! So be it.' And he dismissed me.

" A few days later I was going to put in an appearance at the Council of State. As was my habit I went into the Section of the Interior before the sitting. There I found a committee of Defermon, Andréossy and Boulay de la Meurthe, Jaubert, Quinette, Daru and Thibaudeau, the reporter, sitting under the chairmanship of Régnier. The famous declaration, of which I had not heard a word hitherto, was under discussion. I went up to the council-room. Maret came up to me.

" ' I'm very glad to see you here,' he said. ' You know the important reason for which we have met ; we want your help.'

" ' Is it only the wording,' I replied, ' or the famous declaration itself we are assembled to discuss ? '

" ' The declaration is indispensable ; there are no two opinions about that. But good brains like yours should be consulted on the question of wording, especially as we are all to sign it individually.'

" Chauvelin came up and took me aside : ' You know what has brought us here ; we shall all be hung if the other lot comes back.' Chauvelin was sweating with

fright and already in tears. I left him to talk to Petit. 'This declaration,' the latter said, 'is useless, to say the least. It is thus that a member of a body is drawn into acts of which he does not approve. You ought to speak against it.' 'We'll see,' I answered.

"I had heard part of the declaration read in the committee and had noticed that it contained principles contrary to those I had professed all my life. I had made up my mind not to sign it and to be careful to take no part in the debate, for fear of furnishing any reason for attributing its wording to me. I pretended I was going back to the committee and came down the stairs with the intention of not returning. At the foot of the staircase I met Locré. 'Where are you going?' he said. 'I nearly wrote to you to inform you of the object of the sitting; we want your help in wording the declaration.'

"I let Locré talk and went up again with him. Obliged to take my place, I sat between Maret and Pommereul. Thibaudeau read the declaration. When he was half-way through I calmly took my hat, rose and left. I felt that all eyes were on me and fully realized the effect my exit would have.

"In the evening I had a note from Locré inviting me to the Section of the Interior the next day to sign the declaration, which was to be presented to the Emperor at midday. I replied that I could not go to the Section. At four o'clock the next day (Sunday) one of Locré's clerks brought me the declaration to sign. I had him informed by my porter that I could not receive him, and I wrote the following letter to the Emperor. . . .* In the evening Pasquier told me that d'Hauterive, Chauvelin, De—— (?) had done the same. About three o'clock on the Monday I saw Locré himself coming to my house in

* This letter is missing.

full uniform. 'What are you doing?' he said as he came in. 'You're ruining your future. You must hear what has happened; keep it secret and think things over. D—— (?) told me to write to him officially that you had refused to sign, and said he would show my letter to the Emperor.'

"'The Emperor knows all,' I answered. 'I gave him my reasons in writing; I know him too well, and he knows me too well, to have any fear of the consequences. In any case I expect to see him personally at the levée to-morrow.'

"'Oh!' replied Locré, 'as you have explained to the Emperor yourself there's nothing more to be said, and I'll go and tell D—— (?).'

"In the evening Régnier wrote to tell me that he had had a talk with the Emperor about me and it was very important that I should know the upshot. I went to see him at once. 'They want to ruin you,' he said. 'They have denounced you to the Emperor as having refused to sign the declaration; your sudden exit from the Council when it was being read has been represented to him as a signal mark of disapproval. Yet the Emperor has had a letter which he did not show me, but he was apparently satisfied with it. He has been much struck with the reasons you have given him in his own interests as well as those of his son. Ultimately I succeeded in reassuring him as to your feelings. "Do you think he would refuse to take the oath again?"' 'You realize,' I replied, 'that if I had not intended to remain faithful to the Emperor and take the oath, I should not have accepted the office of Councillor of State.' 'That's exactly what I told him,' said Régnier.

"Then throwing his arms round me, and with tears in his eyes, he burst out: 'Sign the declaration, my dear

Molé, and carry the good tidings to the Emperor at his levée to-morrow morning.'

"'If I signed now, the Emperor would think less of me for it; the reasons which have prevented me from doing so are not such as can alter. Anyhow, I will go to the levée to-morrow and explain matters to the Emperor.'

"Régnier was extremely persistent. 'The Emperor will not ask you,' he added, 'but you may be certain that you would give him great pleasure.'

"Next morning I was at the levée; a double reason took me there. I went to defend myself and also Pasquier, who had been forbidden to come within forty leagues of Paris. I asked the Emperor if I might speak to him privately. He agreed.

"'Well,' he said with a smile; 'so you're still intractable.'

"'You have read my reasons, Sire; the declaration embodies principles worthy of 1793: it begins with the words—*all sovereignty resides in the people*. With a principle such as that, the people can change its government and sovereign every day; it can give and take back the Crown as it thinks fit. It could refuse it to your son. If the word was "emanates," it might be said that in delegating sovereignty to a man and his posterity for ever, it is alienating the right to take it back from him, but the word "resides" leaves no limit to the instability of institutions and the throne.'

"'Your remark is true enough; I have been much struck with it. But why didn't you make it at the Council during the discussion?'

"'At the Council, Sire, I was afraid to.'

"'You were afraid! What do you mean?'

"'I was afraid, Sire, because I see revolution threatening there, ready to deluge France once more with terror and

proscriptions. In its ranks I see the men who produced the Law of Suspects and proposed the deportation of the nobles, men who are all ready to resume and renew our long series of disasters. In that company I do not feel equal to coping with such men, and my sole thought is to let them forget me.'

"'At the moment we shall certainly have to accept the help of the Jacobins to ward off the most pressing of our dangers. But you may be easy in your mind; I am here to control them, and they will never make me go further than I want to go. You see that you need not be afraid of speaking in the Council of State when I am presiding.'

"The conversation continued in this tone on the same subject. I ventured a few remarks on the exile and sequestration decrees which had appeared the previous evening, but he would not let me finish.

"'Don't you see,' he said, 'that these measures actually protect those they seem to harm. They strike terror, restrain those who are ready to compromise themselves, and save me from taking other measures which are possibly more legal but certainly far more severe.'

"'Sire, you have included a man on whose behalf I wish to make a special appeal to your fairness and good nature. M. Pasquier.'

"'Why, what has happened to M. Pasquier?'

"'He has been forbidden to come within forty leagues of Paris, Sire.'

"'Well, after all, is it such a dreadful fate to have to keep away from Paris for a time? If he has a country house anywhere near he can go there.'

"'But it is merely leaving Paris which M. Pasquier feels so much, Sire. He complains of harsh treatment he has done nothing to deserve.'

" ' Good heavens ! How on earth can you say that ? M. Pasquier betrayed me.'

" ' M. Pasquier did not betray you, Sire. The measure he took as Prefect of Police was inspired by his desire to save the city of Paris. Circumstances were so critical that it would be hard to say what he ought to have done. They were such as Your Majesty so well described in your proclamation from Lyons : *there are circumstances out of reach of human organization.*'

" ' I follow you ; you want to remind me that I have promised to forget everything. But you should remember that I have spoken, and could only speak, of what has happened during my absence. My abdication released all Frenchmen from their duty towards me, and it would be as unjust as odious to punish them for what they did subsequently. But that does not apply to Pasquier, as I was still fighting at the head of my army when he betrayed my confidence and gave the signal for defection in Paris by a letter to the Provisional Government in which he pronounced in favour of deposing me and the restoration of the Bourbons. Could I not bring him to justice to-day, and is there a court which would not pronounce him guilty ? '

" I made another attempt to excuse what Pasquier had done.

" ' Wait a minute,' said the Emperor. ' His guilt is all the greater because, before making him Prefect of Police, I pointed out the full measure of the obligations he was undertaking. I was at Fontainebleau and sent for him. It was a Sunday and I asked him : " If a Bourbon came back to France would you arrest him ? " " Yes," he replied without hesitation. Then I appointed him Prefect of Police.'

" ' In that case, Sire, I will make no further attempt to

excuse M. Pasquier's letter, but will you permit me to appeal to your kindness to me and ask you, as a personal favour, to revoke the decree of exile in his case? I will offer to go bail for him.'

"'You mean to say you will go bail for a man who has betrayed me?'

"'Yes, Sire, because I'm certain he never thought he was betraying you, and I will answer with my head for the certainty that, if he promises, you will never find him involved in gossip, much less any intrigue.'

"'It's impossible, I'm afraid. I may have to join the army at any time now, and while I'm fighting I cannot leave people in Paris whose behaviour in the past has shown that they are capable of conspiring against me.'

"I reported to Pasquier the part of this conversation which concerned him, as I was curious to know what he would say about the Fontainebleau adventure. 'The Emperor's only lapse from the truth,' he said, 'is in putting into his own mouth what he had instructed the High Chancellor to say to me in the Great Gallery when the High Chancellor sent for me. "M. Pasquier," he said to me, "the Emperor has just been talking of you appreciatively to me; I think he has an important post in mind for you, but first you must give me an honest answer to one question. If a Bourbon set foot on French soil would you feel capable of having him arrested?" "I should do so," I answered, "if it was a duty of my office." "In that case," replied Cambacérès, "the Emperor appoints you Prefect of Police." "Monseigneur," I said, "I shall try to prove worthy of the Emperor's confidence." Word for word, that is the conversation I had with the High Chancellor at Fontainebleau,' added Pasquier."

On the May 17 following Count Molé had another

ALEXANDER I. EMPEROR OF RUSSIA.
From an engraving after the painting by Wolkoff.

interview with the Emperor at the Elysée. It was destined to be the last. Napoleon was gloomy and depressed, but yet calm. This last conversation* was long, and covered the crisis which the empire and France were passing through, the Jacobins, the aristocracy, the army, and the possible partition of France. They were never to meet again.

* We possess no record of it.

CHAPTER X

Count Molé leaves Paris for a cure at Plombières.—He receives his nomination as a peer by the Emperor.—He decides not to sit.—At the Château du Marais he hears the news of Waterloo and returns in haste to Paris.—The city seems very calm.—Formation of a committee of action to hasten the return of Louis XVIII.—Count Molé offers to appear in the Upper Chamber and propose the deposition of the Emperor, and then secure a vote of the Municipal Council in favour of an address demanding the return of the King.—Interview with Fouché.—Details of Napoleon's second abdication.—Indifference of the majority of the populace of Paris.—Demonstration by the National Guard in front of the Elysée: Napoleon's attitude.—Attitude of the representative Chamber.—The parties in it.—Manuel.—Appointment of the Government Committee and the plenipotentiaries for treating for an armistice and peace.—Count Molé's effort to recall the King and arrest the advance of the allies.—Tasks assigned by the Committee to Vitrolles, Pasquier and General de Girardin.—Count Molé takes his draft address to the Hôtel de Ville.—Bondy, the Prefect.—Impression made on the Municipal Council.—A story about Richard Lenoir.—Discomfiture of the plenipotentiaries sent by Fouché.—The latter's intrigues.—The capitulation of La Vendée.—Napoleon leaves for Rochefort.—The address of the Representative Chamber.—The part played by Manuel.—Capitulation of Paris.—Patriotism of the Prince of Eckmühl.—A council of war pronounces resistance impossible.—News of the capitulation reaches the Municipal Council.

CHAPTER X

SOON afterwards Count Molé's broken health compelled him to leave Paris, and on May 30 he left for Plombières. There, tortured as he was by the certainty of approaching disaster to his country, he found only solitude and ennui instead of the rest on which he had counted. It was during his visit there that he received from the Emperor his nomination as a peer, but feeling that he would never be able to make the Emperor adopt his idea of moderation, he decided not to take his seat, and wrote to Cambacérès that he could not return. He had regarded the experiment of March 20 as madness; he foresaw that the return of Napoleon would bring down fresh disasters upon France, and events had convinced him that the return of the Bourbons had in 1814 been the only solution which could save the country. Everything was now uncertain, and for the second time he realized that the return of Louis XVIII could alone save France. So the moment he heard that the Emperor had left to join his army in Belgium his one desire was to return to Paris and serve the King.

His political attitude during the Hundred Days was not understood in all quarters and made him the object of the most bitter criticisms and most violent attacks. He felt the injustice very deeply. He therefore broke off the compilation of his "Memoirs" to anticipate the Hundred Days and the Second Restoration, and explain his conduct.*

"I know not what presentiment," he writes, "urges

* "Memoirs of Count Molé (1815-1818)." The following pages to the end of this volume are taken from this part of the "Memoirs."

me to quicken my pace. I fear that in proceeding with my 'Memoirs' I shall never have time to bring them to a conclusion. I am anxious to reach a period which affects the reputation I shall leave behind me. My friends or my children have a right to call for an account of my conduct during the Hundred Days." . . . .

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"My sole object in producing this work is to make myself known. I have enjoyed writing it, and it will often have been a great help and often a great consolation. Neither empty pride nor childish vanity urged me to undertake the task. It is no use looking for a book or an author here; it is the most sincere document that has ever seen the light. (My story during the Hundred Days, beginning at the time when the disembarkation at Cannes was known.)"

Count Molé decided to leave Plombières after a visit of twelve days. His friends wrote to him to postpone his return, pointing out that it would be impossible for him not to take his seat in the House of Peers, and that if he did sit he would run great risks as a peer nominated by the Emperor. As a matter of fact there was already open talk in Paris of reprisals against those who had served Napoleon after his return from Paris. On the other hand, by not sitting he would be exposed to the venom of the Emperor's partisans.

He left Plombières, however, though he had made up his mind that whatever happened he would not set foot in the House of Peers. He stayed only a week in Paris and then went to visit his mother-in-law, Madame de la Briché, at the Château de Marais, where he found Countess Molé and his two young daughters. Pasquier and Barante came to join him there. He did not expect to stay there

long and had decided to leave for Vichy, where he would await events.

His boxes were packed on his carriage* and he was to leave at five o'clock in the morning. He was feeling sorry to be leaving "this sweet, retired spot, Marais," and to be tearing himself away from the theatre of events, as his friends advised, when at ten o'clock in the night of June 19, the evening before his departure, a note in an unknown hand informed him that Napoleon was in Paris and his army destroyed. "There is talk," added the note, "of poisoning and death; the people are in a fever of expectation and consternation, but he says not a word." This news came from a neighbour, who had sent it through a peasant.

He immediately sent out for the post horses, which were being harnessed to Pasquier's barouche. He took horse with him and Barante, and at five o'clock in the morning he reached Paris.

"How can I describe what I felt?" he writes, "as I saw the calmness and silence in the streets, the tricolour still floating over the Tuileries and the Élysée Palace, where the Old Guard was still on duty and whither so many faded glories and vanished greatnesses had fled for refuge! We were so moved and agitated on our arrival that it was difficult to realize the peace and profound silence all about us. At my house everyone was sleeping so soundly that I roused the whole neighbourhood and all but broke in my own door before I could make myself heard.

"I went straight to my brother-in-law and Germain whom I found in bed and who told me what had happened. 'The army is so disorganized,' they said, 'that nothing can stop it or arrest the advance of the Allies. Bonaparte has not the slightest intention of killing himself. On the

* Memoirs of Count Molé (1815–1818).

contrary he seems to be clinging desperately to life and hesitating between several courses. It is thought that he wanted to use the powers given him by the constitution to dissolve the Chambers and set up a dictatorship, but shrank from the consequences of such a step. Deputies and generals are negotiating with him to make him abdicate in favour of his son. It is also said that one party in the Chamber is anxious to declare him deposed and recall the King, but this party is becoming more feeble or timid every moment and does not appear likely to get its way. Otherwise Paris is quiet.'

"At midday I returned to Pasquier's house where we had arranged to meet. Each of us communicated what information he had gathered. We were all of us thinking a little of ourselves as well, and our pleasure illumined our faces. Pasquier already saw himself raised to the ministry, the object of the prayers and ambitions of a lifetime.

"Barante, despising Prefectures this time, thought himself called to anything and everything. Tournon would be satisfied with the Prefecture of the Seine and even less, provided he was allowed to resume a political career and released from the sort of boycott the reaction of 1814 had imposed upon him. In his anxiety to have claims to make on the cause which was about to triumph, Tournon did incredible things. In concert with Barante, he produced a little pamphlet which he had distributed everywhere. Seeing him acting in this fashion I was privately amazed at his levity and lack of mental nobility. I was astonished at the highly casual and contemptuous way in which he spoke of the man he had served rather more obsequiously than even personal devotion requires.*

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* Four lines missing.

"I had thoroughly disapproved of his enterprise of March 20, because it could only plunge France into misfortune. As a Frenchman first and all the time, I should now have been willing that he should be declared deposed and sent beyond the seas; but nothing would have made me insult the great unfortunate merely to arrest the advance of the foreigners, nor allow me to forget glories which the very man who had gained them seemed to have forgotten.

"Becquey, Royer-Collard and General de Girardin joined us and we formed a kind of committee of which Pasquier was the leading spirit. The various duties were assigned: Royer was in touch with the Court of Ghent and the Faubourg Saint-Germain, Girardin with the generals and the army, and Barante with the Liberals and various deputies. Pasquier was on good terms with Vitrolles, the agent of the King and particularly of Monsieur who had been released from prison by Fouché and was in hiding in the Rue Royale. I was given the task of dealing with Fouché himself whom I was seeing at all hours, and with whom my functions as a member of the Municipal Council brought me into a contact which I could make as frequent as I liked.

"My position could not fail to be a very delicate one. I confided my difficulties to Pasquier and Royer. I had been made a peer by Napoleon, and though I had never taken my seat I offered to make an immediate appearance in the Upper Chamber and propose the deposition of the Emperor. This was on the advice of Tournon, but Pasquier, Royer and Barante opposed the scheme in my own interests. 'You may be certain,' said Royer-Collard, 'that the Royalists will not feel the slightest gratitude to you for your courage; they will regard you simply as one of Bonaparte's peers and never forgive you for acting

in that capacity, though once only and merely for the purpose of contributing, at the risk of your life, to secure their return.'

"Another idea which occurred to me was to repeat the famous action taken by the Municipal Council in 1814. The whole committee encouraged me and I hastily drew up a draft address which it instructed me to communicate to Vitrolles and Fouché.

"I knew the latter too well not to foresee all the obstacles he would oppose to the execution of my plan. He was anxious to do nothing hasty, cultivate his popularity with all parties, and put off emerging from the clouds and showing his colours until the last possible moment, so that to the eyes of the revolutionaries he might appear to be yielding to inevitable necessity, and the King might be induced to believe that to him, and him alone, he owed his crown and his return.

"In Fouché's antechamber I found Flahaut and Labédoyère, who were furiously demanding to see him. A trembling usher assured him that the minister was not in. 'Traitor!' cried Labédoyère in a voice of thunder. 'He's hiding, he's afraid of me, but I know where to find him.'

"'What are you doing here?' Flahaut asked me.

"'The same as yourself. I've come to see the Duc d'Otranto.'

"'Shall we not see you in the House of Peers?'

"'No.'

"Both of them gave me threatening looks, which I confess only filled me with compassion as I thought of their future.

"In the evening I went back to Fouché's house and described my plan. The address adopted by the Municipal Council was to be sent up to the Representative Chamber

'Do you really want to ruin everything, and yourself into the bargain?' he said. 'If, contrary to expectations, the Municipal Council votes the address, the Representative Chamber won't even let you finish reading it. Possibly you yourself will be killed at the bar of the House, and the movement you will provoke will release the leading parties in Paris and the army from obligations which it will become impossible to make them acknowledge again. Let me act as I think fit; don't be precipitate, and rely on me to let you know when the time for action has come.'

"My talk with Fouché continued for some time. In the end I saw that I should get nothing out of it, that he would throw me over if necessary, and in any real emergency we should find him an opponent rather than a help.

"But it was at the Élysée that the most important event was in the making at this moment. All the details of the second abdication of Bonaparte were furnished to me by Cambacérès himself. He was good enough to give me an account in his own hand.

"The news of the disaster of Waterloo was known in Paris on Tuesday, June 20. About nine o'clock in the evening Joseph summoned the ministers to read to them the letter the Emperor had written to him. That letter mentioned neither the causes of the loss of the battle nor the consequences it might have. Bonaparte simply said that he was leaving for Paris. For a long time the company stood in gloomy silence, which was broken only by a lapse into empty nothings. As if they were all afraid to communicate the impression made upon them they separated without coming to any decision, and adjourned until eight o'clock next morning.

"Cambacérès stayed behind with the two brothers, Lucien and Joseph; he did not conceal from them the imminence of the peril.

"The two men seemed thoroughly to realize it, and Lucien added that the Emperor must not count on favourable or helpful sentiments in the Representative Chamber.

"Bonaparte arrived during the night and thus ahead of the time fixed for the adjourned meeting. Joseph went to meet him, and shortly afterwards the princes and ministers were ushered into the first drawing-room, where Bonaparte was awaiting them. He affected a composure which his face belied. After certain disjointed and purposeless remarks the company gathered round a table which had nothing on it whatever.

"'Everything can be put right,' he then said, 'with money and men. If I am given them I will guarantee to save France. . . . What do you think of the Legislative Body? There are the Jacobins, of course. . . .'

"No one answered. Fouché and Davoust began some trifling observations which were interrupted by the arrival of the Duc de Bassano.

"'Maret,' Bonaparte said to him, 'have you any news, for us?'

"'No, Sire, I know that there is uneasiness and unrest; and it is right that Your Majesty should know.'

"'But can we call ourselves a nation at all,' continued Bonaparte, 'if the loss of a battle makes us downhearted?'

"Every time anyone revealed apprehension or insisted on a comparison between the allied forces and the exhaustion of France he would repeat: 'We are not a nation, or are we a nation?'

"Réal, the Prefect of Police, followed Maret. He said that neither the Chamber nor the National Guard could be counted on. His words made a great impression, even on the Emperor. The discussion was becoming animated when two ministers, Merlin and Defermon, were announced. They had just come from the Chamber, which they said

was in a ferment. 'We must expect vital decisions,' added Defermon, 'unless we act first and at once. Our colleague, Regnault, who has remained behind in the Chamber, will be here very soon to give Your Majesty a more detailed and authentic account of what it is to be hoped or feared.'

"Regnault and Boulay came, as promised. The former gave us to understand that if the Chamber consented to vote the men and money it would insist on supervising their employment; that there was no reason for thinking that it intended to change the form of government or recall the royal house, but that the necessity and longing for peace might lead it astray and involve it in dangerous decisions. They added that perhaps it would be a good idea if the Emperor went to the Chamber at once, and if we profited by the impression his presence there would make, to carry a decree the outlines of which we must formulate beforehand. It was easy to see that Bonaparte did not like this idea. It met with general opposition also.

"Regnault now confined himself to insisting that the ministers should go to the Chamber and give the information for which they would be asked. This fresh proposal was under discussion when Flaugergues and another deputy appeared. Bonaparte went with them into the garden and remained there for a considerable time; when he came back he was agitated and lost in thought.

"The debate continued for more than two hours. Bonaparte frequently withdrew into his study or the garden, sometimes by himself and sometimes with Joseph or one of his ministers. When he was not present the discussion was freer and less disjointed. At length the company recognized unanimously that the political

existence of the Emperor would injuriously affect the negotiations with the foreign powers—a fact which would give the Chamber an excuse for lapsing into fierce party strife, and favour the ambitious designs of certain deputies who were anxious to snatch the reins of government.

"Napoleon then joined us and spoke as follows: 'If you think that a second abdication may save France I shall not shrink from taking that course; I would once more leave the throne, but we ought to know what the French people desire, and what they and the Powers will accept, and not plunge into a wrong course, either through fear or from any other motive. Will the regency prove its use? Don't you think the Jacobins will seize this favourable moment to return to power in the name of the Republic? Don't you know that there is in France a party which is not large numerically but may increase, a party which does not want a republic, myself or Louis XVIII? I have no need to tell you that perhaps this party has supporters in the present Government. I want each of you to say exactly what he thinks and we will compare notes.'

"In thus indicating, without naming, the Orléans party, Napoleon had revealed the object of his greatest fears.

"He went round collecting opinions, beginning with his brother, Joseph, who gave his views so briefly and in such a low tone that he could not be heard. All we gathered was that he left it to the Emperor's wisdom.

"Lucien, in a studied speech which he had prepared beforehand, laid it down that: (1) the Emperor must abdicate; (2) his abdication could only be in favour of his son, and therefore conditional. He concluded by adroitly insinuating that without departing from the *senatus-consultus* conferring the regency on the Empress it was necessary to provide for the needs of the moment by setting up a Provisional Government which would

cease to function the moment Marie Louise and her son returned. Lucien's secret ambition was to be head of this Government.

"Cambacérès was in favour of abdication pure and simple.

"It was thus that Napoleon was induced to abdicate for the second time. He did so only because he was afraid of being deposed, and was still hoping that he would be recalled by the nation and the army.

"Of those about him Lucien alone had anticipated this second abdication from the start; he had had no illusions about his brother's undertaking and with great sagacity judged that he would be unable to maintain his position. This it is which had determined his resolution to make up to him with a view either to succeeding him or governing the State during the minority of his son. The popular manner he affected, the over-anxiety of his friends to secure his nomination as a deputy, and his desire to be President of the Chamber left us in no doubt as to the schemes he had in mind.

"Yet Paris, the army and the Chambers presented a very curious spectacle, well calculated to upset the cleverest prophecies as to our future. Seeing that the army was beside itself with fury and shouting to be led to battle, and also that the National Guard and practically the whole nation were vowing to die or reduce Paris to ashes rather than have a Bourbon back, it might be expected that it would be difficult, and perhaps impossible, to secure the return of the King to his capital.

"But the Duc d'Otranto had too much experience to take these phenomena at their face value. If he could prolong the uncertainty and hesitation of the different parties for a few more days his goal would be reached; the Russian army would appear and, once combined with

the English and Prussians, make any resistance impossible. Then he turned to the opponents of legitimacy :

" ' Let us accept this inevitable yoke,' he was saying, ' seeing there is no escaping it ; but let us negotiate and secure terms to make it less onerous. The first condition required to make it less onerous is that Louis XVIII shall take as his minister the man who voted for the death of his brother, and that I shall be a member of the Council to represent and defend all your interests.'

" Simultaneously he was saying to the Royalists : ' You may perhaps see Paris reduced to ashes, your families massacred and your property destroyed. I alone have been able to avert and can still deflect the blows in store for you, but you must help me as I am losing authority. You must give, indeed you must be lavish with, guarantees calculated to soothe the susceptibilities of those who fear and hate you. Get me made the King's minister.'

" The new men very soon realized the trickery in such language and raged against the man who dared to use it. The Royalists, a credulous body, agreed to everything, and proclaimed the Duc d'Otranto saviour of the monarchy.

" And those who returned with the King brought back all their illusions.

" The French army, concentrated and organized once more under the walls of Paris, was regretting Napoleon and his glory. The men were exhausting themselves in cursing a monarch and princes who had found no other support than that of foreign bayonets. They realized, too, all the old scores this monarch and these princes had to clear off, and they believed no reconciliation was possible. They thought that all the humiliations they had received in 1814 would be nothing compared to those which now threatened them. Death seemed preferable to the inevitable fate in store for them.

"The National Guard, the lowest class of the population, had been set in motion by certain leaders, and were fraternizing with the army. Their rage and confidence were rising with the conviction that their feelings were shared by the nation at large.

"The middle classes alone seemed calm and more or less indifferent: common sense and caution prevailed with them as with all who are habitually inspired by considerations of self-interest. Revolutions are the work of those who have nothing to lose or nothing more to gain. The shops were open, theatres and parks crowded, and the bourgeois had nothing to fear except the looting with which the National Guard and soldiers were always threatening them.

"Public stocks went up as the allies came nearer and the crisis approached: credit was born again in the shadow of a government which was not yet in existence. No one doubted what the issue would be; the only doubt left was as to the nature and duration of the crisis. The bulk of the population thus deemed its intervention futile, let events take their course, and was already speculating on the future. Excitement and apprehension were left entirely to those who had everything to hope or everything to fear from the new order of things which all saw approaching.

"In the vicinity of the Élysée, the Chambers and the quays, horrible groups could be seen in which popular orators thundered against the aristocracy and the Bourbons. I liked mixing with these groups and carrying my memory back to the crowds and orators of 1793. They were the same old scenes; the same language addressed to the same passions.

"When going home in the evening I usually went by the Champs Élysées and the Avenue de Marigny. As I

walked under the walls of the Élysée garden I admit—or rather I am proud to say—that my heart ached when I thought of what was going on in the mind of the man confined in the palace. After he came back to his country as a usurper, bringing with him all the passions he had once enslaved and all the evils he had once cured, I say frankly there is nothing I would not have done to rid France of him. But even though I opposed him and loathed his return I could not hate him. I had never received any benefits from him, but how many marks of confidence and esteem! And, as this record has shown, although criticizing him, I had admired him; and I can never hate what I have once admired. Many others have proved that they possessed this faculty and courage.

"Fearless as ever, though still clinging to life, he sometimes went unguarded into the streets and let a crowd collect round him. His presence was greeted with loud cheers. Fouché was very apprehensive about these appearances and the excitement they caused, and gave him strict orders to discontinue them. It is not difficult to imagine what this master of the world must have felt on getting orders to go home from Fouché.

"Incidentally, history will note that no Royalist made any attempt on his life, although it would have been very easy. This phenomenon can be accounted for on various grounds. In the first place the dagger hates nothing more than admiration or fear—the two sentiments he had most generally inspired. Secondly, men do not risk their lives for benefits which can be obtained at less cost, and there was not a Royalist who did not regard the triumph of his cause as inevitable and assured.

"Far from trying to meet Bonaparte, I avoided any and every opportunity of seeing him.

"But one evening, again in the Avenue de Marigny, I

found myself drawn along by the crowd and witnessed the saddest sight imaginable. He was on the terrace in uniform. Behind him were the Comte de Montesquieu and the Comte de Beauvau, in the uniform of chamberlains. Some charcoal-burners and porters were talking familiarly with him, begging and praying him to seize the Crown again; he was replying to them in word and gesture, pointing to his heart and bending down to shake hands, while his chamberlains and equerries threw money to the crowd and tried to excite them by their speeches. Perhaps I alone at that moment had any idea of the effort it cost him to fawn upon the *plebs* I had seen him treat with so much authority and disdain, the *plebs* to which he had a natural aversion. Fouché had been informed of what was happening and sent strong patrols. Bonaparte withdrew as soon as he noticed them.

"When I reached home I heard that Thibaudeau had called on me with a view to making the same sort of scene I had seen Labédoyère make at Fouché's. The latter told me also that the Bonapartists looked on me as a traitor and were talking of harming me in some way. I was not alarmed and I had done nothing to deserve it. Events were marching so fast that no one dared to think of vengeance and each day it became more urgent for every man to think of himself.

"The attitude of the Chambers was still unchanged. That of the Representative Chamber will stand out from this period, whatever party spirit may say to-day. It was composed of the most diverse elements: all the passions, opinions, interests and even the crimes of the Revolution were represented. The vilest members of the Convention, such as Barrère and Cambon, reappeared on the tribune. To tell the truth their language was certainly changed: it might have been said that their sole thought

was to rehabilitate themselves by professing an affection for institutions which had stood the test of time, and principles which were prudently liberal. Whilst these converted revolutionaries were asking for a government like the English in all their speeches, Bonapartists, such as Regnault, Defermon, Boulay and Merlin, who were a blaze of gold lace and ribbons, were proposing the most violent measures and urging a dictatorship.

"Both sides were agreed on one point, however—the exclusion of the Bourbons, or at any rate the reigning branch. Any sovereign suited them, provided he was not legitimate.

"The first important act of this Legislative Body was to instruct a committee to revise all our institutions, including the Additional Act. It was a remarkable decision, which thoroughly justified what I had so often told Napoleon—that in opposing interests to doctrines he had soothed the conscience of all without converting or satisfying a single soul. From the moment men ceased to fear him and hope for a share in his immense patronage, political opinions reappeared and the century, as it were, resumed its course. Men no longer desired a ready-made constitution, discussed between a sovereign and his minister. They wanted one taken from a source in the consent of the peoples and in conformity with their wishes and understanding. The really curious point is that in 1815 Bonaparte made the same mistake that the King had made in 1814. In politics there is nothing worse than adopting principles without drawing the logical inferences from them. Sooner or later they are thrown up in one's face, and in times as enlightened as ours governments perish when nations cease to believe in their good faith.

"The news of Waterloo and the return of the Bourbons

had caused a panic in the Chamber, though it lost no time in recovering itself. Its first step was to prepare to defend itself against Bonaparte himself, whom his brother, Lucien, and certain courtiers, had advised to dissolve it. It declared itself indissoluble and proclaimed that anyone who attacked it was guilty of high treason. At length, on June 23, after much hesitation, Bonaparte wrote to the Chambers that he abdicated in favour of his son, and asked them to arrange for the regency at once.

"Three parties were immediately formed. The largest and—without the foreigners—strongest actually wanted Napoleon II to be King. Another wanted the Duke of Orléans or the Prince of Orange. The weakest and most timorous would have liked to have the King back.

"This division is observable in all the debates in the Chamber, where the three parties never failed to reveal their existence. The Bonapartists, making the most of what was left of the good old times and feeling their end approaching, displayed no moderation whatever and insisted furiously that everyone should be bound by irrevocable oaths and engagements. The Orléanists would have been bolder and more numerous if they had been able to count more firmly on the Duke of Orléans, who, as Boulay said one day in the Chamber, left it somewhat doubtful if he would accept the throne. The partisans of Louis XVIII were downhearted and not numerous; they were obliged to conceal their real wishes and disguise their efforts with no little art.

"In this great struggle one speaker alone stood out by virtue of his brains. It was Manuel, a young lawyer from Dauphiné and a devoted servant of Fouché. His speeches were, so to speak, the faithful mirror of the latter's conduct and repeated all his tactics. Handling all the parties very shrewdly, and never speaking of anything but institutions,

independence and the country, Manuel wound up every debate by soothing excited minds and preventing the parties from flying at each other's throats.

"The three parties took stock, however, when the Government Commission was appointed. Our committee, which did not fail to keep in touch with what was going on in the Chambers, proposed Fouché, Caulaincourt, Lanjuinais, MacDonald and Lafayette.

"To understand this selection it must be realized that we could not hope for anyone better. MacDonald was heart and soul with us, Fouché was inevitable and, after all, desired nothing so much as the Restoration. In his pocket he had Caulaincourt, who was not disliked by the Bonapartists and had no desire but to excuse himself for the death of the Duc d'Enghien by a reconciliation with the Bourbons. Lanjuinais, a man with courage but without character, would have yielded everything under the impression that he was resisting, and we were silly enough to think that Lafayette had learned something from experience. But the Bonapartists gained the day and chose Carnot, Fouché, Caulaincourt, Grenier and Quinette, in other words three of Louis XVI's murderers and the presumed murderer of the Duc d'Enghien.

"I was at Fouché's house with Royer-Collard, whom I was in the act of introducing to him, when he was informed that he had just been elected with Carnot. His astonishment was extreme. Carnot was the colleague he feared most, the man who could most effectively thwart his designs.

Nothing could be comparable to the casual, happy-go-lucky, I might even say frivolous, manner in which he governed these great interests. Even his best friends complained to me that on this day he had the destinies of France in his hands and made no use of the opportunity.

He was unquestionably in a position to direct the choice of the Chambers and have the Government Commission constituted as he liked. Instead of doing so he presumptuously relied on his prestige and thought it enough that his wishes should be known. But, as he was much cleverer than anyone else, he found himself in a position to control the Government Commission. So much is clear from the selection of the plenipotentiaries sent to treat for peace with the allied sovereigns and to obtain an armistice from the Duke of Wellington.

"The peace plenipotentiaries were Lafayette, Sébastiani, d'Argenson and Laforest; the others, Andréossy, Boissy d'Anglas, Valencé, Flaugergues and la Besnadière. There was not one member of the King's party, in a word not a man who was not minded to dispute every inch of the ground, i.e., in the first place to ask the foreign monarchs for the King of Rome; failing him, a foreign prince, then the Duke of Orléans, and lastly Louis XVIII on terms and with a constitution which would be imposed on him.

"We had had MacDonald and Oudinot sounded; several generals such as Villatte and Claparède offered to take action if these two marshals would declare themselves. But the latter refused and continued to keep aloof. What seems incredible is that the King and his ministers did not give a sign of life to those who were working for them in Paris. Not a single copy of the Cateau Cambrésis and Cambrai proclamations found its way into the city. Not a single messenger, or a word of guidance, or a letter, came to direct the efforts and keep up the courage of so many who were ready to give their lives for him. His cause has ever been served thus.

"Time was pressing. Not a moment was to be lost in fetching the King back if the march of the foreigners was to be arrested. We decided to make a supreme effort to

force Fouché to action, and the Chambers to obedience, by using the army itself and the council. It was agreed that Vitrolles should have the powers of the King and Girardin should go with Pasquier to seek out General Grouchy at Soissons and tell him that in declaring for the King with his army corps he would be saving France, and his behaviour to the Duc d'Angoulème in the Midi would be forgotten.

"At the same time I was to present my address to the Municipal Council and then take it to the Representative Chamber.

"The whole scheme failed. Vitrolles was thwarted by the Prince d'Eckmühl, who asked him if he took him for a traitor and threatened to have him arrested. Girardin and Pasquier played the fool with us before they started on their errand.

"Girardin maintained that as Pasquier knew Grouchy well, it would have a much greater effect upon him if Pasquier went alone. Pasquier replied that only a general, such as Girardin, could hope to succeed in a mission of this kind and that his (Pasquier's) arrival at Grouchy's head-quarters would make everyone suspicious. The truth is that neither of them liked the idea of their task. By way of splitting the difference we made them go together; but they could not get through and we saw them return the same evening, having done nothing but dine well and play billiards at Ermenonville the whole day.

"Speaking for myself, I went through with my task to the bitter end without any greater success. I told Fouché that it was too late to turn back and that I was going to put my proposal before the Municipal Council; events were marching too fast and the crisis was too plain and too near for him to dare to divert me from my purpose this time.

" ' Do as you like,' he said, ' but you won't succeed.'

" Before I went to the Hôtel de Ville I was anxious to secure the co-operation of members of the council on whom I thought I could rely. I applied first to Tourolles. This incorruptible of incorruptibles—with whom, however, caution triumphed even over incorruptibility—had not dared to resign on March 20, but he had abstained from appearing at the council since that date. The only reply I had from him was he relied more on fifteen hundred thousand foreigners than the Municipal Council to bring the King back, and that he personally would return there only with the members whom Napoleon had dismissed.

" The next I attacked was M. d'Aligre, but, even as I revealed my scheme I could see him turn pale, blush and change countenance. He might have been compromising himself merely by listening to me.

" ' My dear colleague,' he said to me in a trembling voice, ' in the Revolution I never observed anyone ever regretting that he had taken no part. I'm going into the country. *Please* don't tell anyone that you have seen me ! '

" I turned my back on this patent coward and left him still standing and talking to me in the street.

" I went to see Bondy, the Prefect. ' Look here,' I said, ' I've always known you as a brave man and a good Frenchman. It's not a question now of knowing what form of government or what sovereign France will get. That's all settled. What we want to know is whether Louis XVIII will be brought back by his subjects or thrust upon us by foreign bayonets, whether we are once more to see the shame and crime of submitting to the dictates of Europe or, with our King at our head, we shall make any and every effort to preserve at any rate the appearance of independence and partially escape the consequences of a second invasion. Think well before you

answer, M. de Bondy. You need only consult your patriotism and your sense of honour! I do not mention your interests because you are above letting them figure in the calculation. Here is an address I have drafted and am proposing to present to the Municipal Council when I leave this room. Will you read it and tell me if I can count on you to support me?'

"Bondy had listened to me very attentively: I could see from his face all he was thinking. He was hesitating between the voice of the country and loyalty to his oaths; he had shown Bonaparte a devotion which the bad treatment he had received in 1814 had increased. He handed me back the draft after reading it. Then, with his hands pressed to his forehead:

"'M. Molé,' he said, 'I feel the force of your arguments and accept them, cost what it may; but *please* don't hold me to the form, and allow me to draft an address which a faithful servant of the Emperor could sign. Let us recall the King, but in terms which will show that we are only yielding to necessity.'

"'Then I have failed,' I replied. 'What are you afraid of? As we have decided to ask the King to return, would it not be better to do so generously and voluntarily rather than apparently under pressure? Would it not be a finer and better method, and one more consistent with public and private interests?'

"Bondy now criticized part of the wording only. I was firm. 'All right,' he said, pressing my hand, 'as you will. We must go. You'll be satisfied with me, but we shall fail.'

"Preceded by an usher we went into the Council Chamber. The members, with the exception of Tourolles and d'Aligre, were waiting for the communication I was to make to them. The Prefect took his seat and explained in a few words that he regarded my proposal as the only

means of sparing the country a mass of trouble. I began my speech with a description of the situation of Paris and France, and then read the following draft address :

"'ADDRESS TO THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

"'In view of the grave crisis and the imminence of a great peril to the capital, the Municipal Council hastens to acquaint the Government and the Chambers with its fears and desires. Why all these preparations for defence ? Why these preparations for a struggle the issue of which cannot be in doubt ? Can we expose the first city of France to disasters from which nothing can save it if the dispute is prolonged ? It is said that plenipotentiaries have been sent to stay the advance of the foreign armies. Will those plenipotentiaries get a hearing ? Will the authority by which they are sent be recognized ? Do we not see the ambassadors of all the kings of Europe once more gathered round the man they have never ceased to regard as the Ambassador of France ?

"'The Municipal Council does not fear to say that Frenchmen themselves recognize this sovereign as the man who reigns, and *must* reign, over them. The departments are already proclaiming him, and public opinion, so long inarticulate, is everywhere freely taking voice. Will Paris be the last to follow this universal movement ? Is it not the duty of its magistrates to take the first step to realize the desire of all, so that order may be maintained, excited minds calmed, and all hearts satisfied ? Once Frenchmen recover their Father and themselves the allied sovereigns will stay their approach ; let there be no doubt about that. They would have suspended their advance already if we had shown greater haste to reach the goal of all our hopes, a goal on which all eyes are fixed.

"'To its conscience, and to Paris and its population, the Municipal Council owes this profession of the feelings by which it is inspired. It awaits an authorization from the Government to make it known.'"

"How could I describe the faces of those who were listening to me? The greatest Royalists and the most courageous lowered their eyes; all the others angrily glared at me. Richard-Lenoir, a rich manufacturer of the Faubourg Saint-Marceau, and the Santerre of the of the period, snarled that the proper answer to me was to throw me out of the window. The words 'perfidy' and 'traitor' were flying round me.

"Bondy then quietly supported the step I had taken and defended me personally; I am sometimes tempted to think that he saved my life. He was very much liked by the Bonapartists, who could not have a shadow of doubt about his good faith.

"In cases like this nothing is more dangerous than to give way too soon and beat a hasty retreat, so I stayed behind for a friendly talk with my angriest opponents. I pretended to follow their arguments and gently explained my own, but I did not shake them. I gave special attention to Richard-Lenoir.

"Just as he was suggesting in a low tone that I should be arrested: 'Neighbour,' said I, 'it is a long time since you were at Champlâtreux. How are your Chantilly factories getting on?' Richard did not suspect that I knew him and he smiled at this address. He began to talk about my château and criticized the changes I had made in the approach to it. I defended them and retorted by praising the good he had done in the neighbourhood. And lo and behold, he gradually became expansive and ended by telling me his secret.

" ' How could you expect me not to prefer the Emperor to the King ? ' he said. ' In 1813 he prevented me going bankrupt by lending me five hundred thousand francs, while the King nearly ruined me by imposing a duty on cotton in 1814.'

" It was a curious story. Richard's secret is that of the generality of men. He was a quaint creature, but really dangerous. Bonaparte had made him head of the Faubourg Saint-Marceau legion, and fifteen hundred of his workmen formed the élite, in other words the dregs of the National Guard.

" I was glad to get out of the Hôtel de Ville safe and sound and I conducted my retreat, as anyone can see, in very good order.

" I reported to the committee what had transpired ; Pasquier did the same as regards his own mission, which had been a merrier affair.

" When I went to see Fouché ' he remarked : ' I told you so,' tapping me on the shoulder. Adhering to the plan on which he had decided, he wrote to the Duke of Wellington, asking him to suspend his march until the Chambers had put the finishing touches to the social pact which the monarch who was now called upon to govern France would be compelled to sign. This letter was not answered, and the emissaries sent both to the Duke and the monarchs were not even received. At the same time Fouché sent secret agents to Talleyrand and Prince Metternich, with whom he had kept up a correspondence during the Hundred Days. The closer the crisis approached the greater were his efforts to make himself popular with the Royalists. He issued passports to everyone who wished to go to meet the King.

" No one is more under the influence of his personal likes and dislikes, or a worse judge of the aptitudes

or capacity of others, than Fouché. It is the only point in which he resembles Talleyrand. At this time he was immensely taken with the latter's brother, Archambaud de Périgord, subsequently Duc de Talleyrand, and Bruno de Boisgelin. Both had been given him by his friends, the Princesse de Vaudemont and the Duchesse de Fleury, who was known since her divorce by the name of Madame Aimée de Coigny. This lady was extremely intelligent.*

. . . . . .

"I often amused myself by contrasting the manners of the revolutionary, Fouché, with those of these two relics of the former Court. The curious point is that the revolutionary struggled to imitate their refined ways—you can imagine with what success. He reminded me of a strong young father decked out in ribbons and lace.† .

. . . . . .

"One effect of the craze was that Fouché thought he could use Archambaud as Noah used his dove. He sent him to bear the olive branch to Talleyrand and the King, with an offer of his services. I met Archambaud just as he was leaving. He came up to tell me that he would not leave the King in ignorance of all I had done to hasten his return.

"While all this was going on, '*Le Moniteur*' published the submission of La Vendée. The King was on the point of entering Paris as we were reading of the treaty, or rather the capitulation, by which the Andignés, Suzannets, Autichauts and La Rochejaqueleins submitted to Bonaparte, recognized his authority and stipulated in a special article that employments should be open to Vendeans who wished to serve. The same Vendée which had found it so hard to take up arms at the call of the Duc de Bourbon

* One line missing.
† Two lines missing.

found it even harder to bear them for any considerable time, and submitted, some days too soon for its honour, to the forces Generals Lamarque and Travot brought against her.

"Napoleon was watching events from his retreat at Malmaison and was ready to profit by all the openings they gave him.

"Several papers reported his farewell to his soldiers :

"'Though absent,' he said to them, 'I shall follow you in all your actions : no corps will beat the enemy without my knowing of its valour. You and I have been smothered with slanders ; a few more efforts and the coalition will dissolve. Napoleon will know you by the blows you inflict.'

"Officers and men took these lines to themselves. Maret, Regnault, Boulay and the generals used to go to Malmaison at night. There was much intriguing, and the general fermentation increased. I told Fouché of all this, but in this crisis he seemed to me absolutely without resolution or courage. His own life was threatened ; he knew it and did not dare to do anything, not even what was necessary to make himself safe. Carnot had called him a traitor in the committee, Caulaincourt began to realize he would be his dupe, and the generals talked openly of killing him. By dint of much protest and pressure we forced him into adopting the sole remedy—getting rid of Napoleon, whom he sent to Rochefort in the company of General Becker.

"All that remained was to persuade the army to lay down its arms, by no means the easiest of tasks. The tribune of the Chambers still rang with praise of the army and denunciation of the Bourbons. Deputies went among the soldiers telling them that the national honour was in their keeping and that they were the saviours and last hope of the country.

"It must be admitted that the action of this Chamber and the speeches of most of the orators breathed the true spirit of patriotism.

"On the eve of being dissolved by the legions of Europe in arms, this Chamber calmly but vainly protested against the wrong being committed against the nation, and appealed to the incorruptible future. In these days men bring themselves to pour scorn or curses upon it, but if there is ever a revolution in France statues will be raised to it. No doubt it is damned so long as the dogma of legitimacy persists, but it will become the object of religious veneration when it goes down before the doctrine of the rights of peoples.

"It was in the address to the French nation, drawn up by Manuel, that its memorable protest was embodied."

"'We cannot recognize as the legitimate head of the State,' it ran, 'one who on mounting the throne refuses to recognize the rights of the nation and consecrate them in a solemn contract. If the force of arms compels us temporarily to accept a master, and the destinies of a great nation are once more to be at the mercy of the despotic caprice of a small number of privileged persons, the Chamber will yield to force but will protest to the whole world in favour of the oppressed French nation. It appeals here and now to the intelligence and sense of justice of all civilized peoples.'"

"The name of Napoleon was not mentioned in this address, a fact which aroused spirited protests from his partisans. Manuel displayed remarkable art and skill in answering them. Like his master, Fouché, he obviously wanted to force from Louis XVIII the conditions and constitution upon which the Chambers would have insisted.

On this occasion, however, he was compelled to drop the mask, and to his great regret he could not avoid compromising himself. Accused openly of dissimulation and insincerity, he saw that he could not explain matters and would lose his popularity and prestige. 'Must I say all I think?' he cried. 'I desire the happiness of the French nation, but I do not think that it will enjoy any happiness if the reign of Louis XVIII begins again.'

"It was through these words that Manuel became extremely unpopular with the Bourbon Party, which hitherto had based all its hopes upon him. Subsequently he has tried to explain them, and people have been foolish enough not to take his explanation seriously. With his pleasant face and voice, in the prime of life and full enjoyment of his powers, Manuel could be an awkward enemy, though there was nothing easier than to make a useful ally of him. It is the same old mistake, the same craze for uniformity, the result of which is that we thin the ranks instead of filling them.

"However, the thunder of cannon could be heard on all sides and the army, with its back to the walls of Paris, was simply awaiting the signal to hurl itself at the lines of the besiegers. Every day an increasing number of National Guards came to join it, to conquer or perish at its side. The hatred of the foreigner gave a common soul to all who could wield a sword. At any moment fighting might begin and result in the looting and burning of the capital.

"Paris had never been in such danger and in my opinion it owes its escape to the Prince d'Eckmühl. For all his hardness and the fact that he was hated by all he ever commanded, this man really loves his country and has a kind of conscience which he never betrays. He saw the fate in store for Paris and France, and that a victory at

the outset would only make the issue worse by postponing it.

"He refused the army that victory when it could not have escaped him. Under his command he had a hundred or a hundred and twenty thousand men whose enthusiasm was bordering on fury, men who were superbly officered and equipped with a profusion of artillery and material. By unpardonable rashness, as the Duke of Wellington himself told me, Blücher had made his army cross the Seine without waiting for the English, whose mission it was to support this movement. He thus found himself compromised, with forces facing him very much larger than his own. 'It would have been all up with the Prussian army,' added Wellington, 'if Davoust had attacked it.' Davoust saw it, Davoust knew it, and yet held back.

"But as he was none the less dismayed at the burden of responsibility on his shoulders, he called together a council of fifty general officers, at which the question of the defence of Paris was debated. Forty-eight thought that it could not be defended. With rage in their hearts all these officers thus concluded that it was necessary to capitulate. In sheathing their swords they were sacrificing something much more than their lives. They made this sacrifice for the country, not for their own fortunes, for far from thinking of making their peace with the cause about to triumph they now published the famous letter in which they protested so forcibly against the return of the Bourbons.

"Several of them—including Davoust himself—lost no time in regretting having signed it and alleged that their signature had been forced, but they were not believed, and after the King's return they were under a cloud.

"It was during the night of July 3 that Davoust

capitulated. I spent the whole of that night in the Municipal Council, a prey to the greatest anxiety, for if the negotiations fell through, we were bound to expect a terrible catastrophe. At two o'clock in the morning Marshal Masséna, commanding the National Guard, and General Durosnel, its second in command, came with Adjutant Tourton to tell us that everything had been completed and signed. Durosnel's face was a picture of melancholy dejection. Tourton's expressed nothing but the empty satisfaction of a fool who thinks himself an important person. Masséna said that he had lived too long, as his old age had brought him the experience of laying down arms for the first time in Paris. But he was less dejected than Durosnel, and there was something about his bearing and words which seemed to insinuate that he had his eye on the future.

"The council received the communications which were made to it with calm, religious dignity. In a moment there were no pro-Bourbons and no Bonapartists—they were all Frenchmen and nothing but Frenchmen. Everyone silently withdrew. Tourton took me back home at four o'clock in the morning. The foreigners realized only too clearly the risks they had run and feared the resistance they might even yet encounter from the débris of Waterloo and a great wave of patriotism. Henceforth the demobilization of the army was inevitable. They promised themselves they would exhaust and humiliate France if they did not partition her."

CHAPTER XI

Dissolution of the Committee.—Talleyrand and Fouché.—Their distrust of each other.—Intervention by La Fayette.—The Cambrai proclamation.—The Chamber of Representatives issues a declaration on the rights of Frenchmen.—Count Molé accompanies the Duc d'Otranto to Saint-Cloud to see Blücher, and to Neuilly to see Wellington.—Their reception at Saint-Cloud.—Interview with Wellington at Neuilly.—Count Molé's conversation with Talleyrand.—Conference between Talleyrand, Fouché, Wellington, and Pozzo.—Wellington's simple-mindedness.—Louis XVIII's return to Paris.—Uneasy feeling created by Fouché.—Formation of Talleyrand's ministry.—Portraits of Talleyrand, Fouché, the Abbé Louis, Marshal Gouvion Saint-Cyr, and Pasquier.

CHAPTER XI

"HENCEFORTH our committee served no purpose. It must be admitted that it had had more zeal than influence. As regards my own position, I saw that if I liked I could have a great deal of influence. Pasquier was to be a minister, and he did nothing without consulting me. Fouché made overtures to me, and M. de Talleyrand could not be better disposed towards me.

"Once the capitulation was signed, relations with the King were established more by the force of events than any conscious volition. Of those about him we witnessed the successive arrival from Ghent of a nephew of Royer-Collard and M. Guizot. The latter told us all we wanted to know.

"Talleyrand, after being dismissed for twenty-three hours, had triumphed over the royal princes and remained master of the battlefield. He had dismissed M. de Blacas in his turn and was now in sole control. There is no doubt that he was ignorant of the real situation in Paris and France. Although concessions were nothing to him he was reluctant to have Fouché in the council. He certainly indicated that I was one of the men he was most anxious to have at his disposal, and he had apparently decided to give Pasquier the seals. Chateaubriand had taken Talleyrand for his patron in lieu of de Blacas, but finding that he would not be made a minister he had joined Monsieur's party and was now preaching reaction.

"As for the *émigrés* who had left France with the King, they came back less chastened and more rabid than ever. The long trial of 1814 and the terrible lesson of March 20

were still lost on them. The fact is that nothing leads biassed minds further astray than experience misunderstood. The *émigrés* were convinced that Bonaparte would never have succeeded on March 20 if they had been allowed to have their own way in 1814, i.e., if instead of compromising with revolution the authorities had frankly reacted against it.

" Their friends or their families who had remained behind in Paris were of a very different opinion ; they had seen things at such close quarters that there was no room for self-delusion. They were so downhearted that they went almost too far in the concessions they offered. As we shall see, the arrival of the *émigrés* soon restored their confidence, and with it their illusions and delusions. But at first they were at sixes and sevens on the subject of Fouché. The *émigrés*, agreeing with the King for the first and only time, rejected the idea of making him a minister, whereas, by another freak of fortune, Monsieur and all who had stayed in France maintained that there was no other way of salvation.

" To attain his object Fouché held up terrors innumerable before the eyes of the King and the princes. He had them overwhelmed with alarmist reports from all quarters and alleged that he dare not answer for their safety in Paris, while all the time secretly encouraging the hopes and audacity of the Bonapartists. He hoped thereby to make himself increasingly inevitable and indispensable.

" He showed me the letter he was sending to the King, in which he resigned the functions of head of the Provisional Government. It was cunning though arrogant, and full of admonitions so haughty that they might well be taken for threats. At his office I found poor Caulaincourt, who was beginning to find out that he had been a dupe all the time. Fouché's room was never empty :

Royalists and Bonapartists streamed in, Vitrolles and Barrère, the victors and the vanquished. He would offer the latter passports and letters of recommendation for use abroad; thus trying to rid himself of those who might become a nuisance to him.

"'What do you think of that old fool?' he asked me as Lafayette was going out. 'Do you know a bigger one? What do you think he has just asked me? To respect the liberty of the National Representative Chamber until the foreigners come and close its doors. You can imagine that I shall save them the trouble; before I let them come in with the King, I shall send our friends the representatives to reflect on political principles in their own homes. As regards him,' he continued, seeing Benjamin Constant come in, 'it's a different matter. He has talent and brains, but he uses them like the shoemakers who make shoes to fit all feet.'

"Fouché seemed to me particularly concerned about his position with regard to Talleyrand. He appeared doubtful about the sincerity of the promises he had received and his intention to make him a minister. Every time he mentioned him he omitted the 'Monsieur,' and called him 'Talleyrand,' or 'that rascal, Talleyrand,' in a casual, indifferent and bantering tone which presupposed a long-continued practice, pointing to complicity or contempt.

"The '*Moniteur*' had published two proclamations by the King, one dated from Cateau-Cambrésis on June 25 and countersigned by the Duc de Feltre, and the other dated from Cambrai on the 28th and countersigned by Talleyrand. The tone of these two documents was very different. That of the first was abrupt and menacing, well calculated to ruffle everyone. That of the second was clever and perhaps too humble; it contained promises

to which too little effect has been given. Pray Heaven that no one will bring them up against him who made them, or rather his successors ! "

" ' The experience,' it ran, ' will not be wasted, and I intend to do everything to save France. I claim to have augmented the Charter by all the guarantees which can assure its benefits. The unity of the ministry is the strongest I can secure ; I mean that unity to be a reality and I intend the open and determined actions of my council to safeguard the interests and calm the fears of all. I should like to select those who are to be in close touch with my person and my family from Frenchmen of every class and station. I forgive everything that has happened from the day I left Lille to that of my entry into Cambrai. The only exceptions to this pardon are the authors of this horrible plot ; the list will be drawn up by the two Chambers, and they will be dealt with according to law.' "

" What was the sequel to these promises ? Not for one moment has there been any unity of the ministry. The timid, hesitating methods of the council alarmed all interests. Appointments at the courts of the King and the royal family were reserved for *émigrés* and their families, and Talleyrand and Fouché drew up lists of prescribed persons at their own sweet will instead of allowing the Chambers, if they so desired, to nominate the real culprits for punishment according to law.

" Thanks to the Duc d'Otranto, the representatives carried on their work down to the last moment. They drew up their form of constitution and published a declaration of the rights of Frenchmen. This latter document, of which Garat was the author, enshrined an

enunciation of the principles of representative government such as existed in England. All that could be asked of it is found more or less in the Charter, the exception being the abolition of all hereditary nobility but the *pairie*, and the acceptance by the people of the constitutional pact which its representatives would have made readily enough.

"Nothing has proved to me more clearly how men's minds had advanced, and how near the Revolution was to its end, than to see these principles become the gospel of the very man who had proscribed them in 1795. It was very curious that in 1815 Barrère, Cambon and Garat should be advocating doctrines defended by Lally, Clermont-Tonnerre and Mounier in 1789. One deputy, Garnon by name, even went so far as to propose to return to the constitution of 1791. One of the most remarkable articles of this ephemeral constitution of 1815 actually restored every hereditary peer with an endowment of thirty thousand francs a year. All salaried appointments other than those of a minister, ambassador and army or naval officer were incompatible with the dignity of a peer—a strange lesson for the Representative Chamber to give to the authors of the Charter, who had certainly treated the peerage as people who did not want it.

"The King was five leagues from Paris, waiting for Fouché's permission to enter the city; it was the cockade which still delayed matters. Fouché insisted that the three colours should be retained. That was the wish of the army, the National Guard and, it must be admitted, the great majority of the nation. The King replied that the tricolour had now become the badge of revolt. The best minds were divided on this question. I confess I leaned in the direction of the popular view. If a Bourbon could frankly and honestly carry that cockade I felt that

France was saved, the Revolution over, and the great problem solved.

"I called on the Duc d'Otranto to discuss this matter with him, and found him on the point of leaving to see Blücher at Saint-Cloud and Wellington at Neuilly. He knew that I knew the latter; he had never seen him and urged me to accompany him. The interview promised to be memorable. I did not hesitate.

"We were entering a carriage, followed by his secretary, Fabry, when he spied de Valence on the steps and invited him to join the party. Those who have known the man will recognize the true Fouché in this. He was preparing for one of the most important acts of his life, a conference which was to decide the future of France, and incidentally his own, and was casually choosing for his confidant an inveterate and indiscreet chatterbox like Valence. Perhaps he had a secret motive—to secure a witness of his efforts to defend the vanquished.

"We spent a considerable time passing through the Prussian lines. Every minute we had to stop and give our names. Valence, who had just dined well, was in high spirits, and never ceased a diatribe against the Bourbons. Fouché did not contradict him, and his replies were confined to such remarks as were necessary to keep him going. The secretary, Fabry, with a lead from his master, talked about nothing but the country, institutions and liberty. Valence's words convinced me that his party hoped for no favourable issue and thought that there was nothing more to save.

"Darkness was falling when we reached Saint-Cloud. The Duc d'Otranto had himself pompously announced as the 'President of the French Government,' but this had little effect on the Prussian officers. They looked at us curiously and with rather an air of mockery. We went

through the Empress Marie Louise's apartments; her bedchamber and bed, with its gauze cover dotted with bees, were occupied by old Blücher. As we were entering, the door was closed against us and we were told that he had just gone to sleep. His chief of staff, Geismann, received us in a sumptuous boudoir. He was standing by a table on which there was bread, wine and a portion of cheese. He did not invite Fouché to take a seat and replied coldly to his compliments. We promptly withdrew and made for Neuilly, where a different and more important scene was about to open.

" Wellington was in occupation of Murat's pretty house. Here silence and simplicity reigned instead of the noise and luxury which surrounded the Prussian general. There were no external signs to suggest the victor of Waterloo. We wandered about for a long time in the dark without meeting any officer or soldier to show us the way in. We entered a little antechamber, where an aide-de-camp received us; opening the door of the next room, he announced us without any other preliminaries. It was a great shock to me. I expected to find Wellington alone or surrounded by his generals, but behind him I saw the Prince de Talleyrand, Pozzo di Borgo, Count von Goltz, Beurnonville and other less important persons.

The Duke came to meet Fouché, holding out his hand with a kindly expression; he greeted me in similar fashion. Talleyrand was at first very icy towards the Duc d'Otranto. Wellington took the latter into a corner of the room. Talleyrand took me aside and I had the following conversation with him; as I was afraid of forgetting it, I wrote it down the moment I got home.

" ' What do you think of the present situation, M. Molé ? Everything I see and hear proves to me that we are bad judges of it from a distance, though our proclamation

from Cambrai will have shown you that I had partially guessed what was happening. In the proclamation the King pledges himself to complete the Charter and give the nation in full and without stint the institutions, and the enjoyment of the rights it demands. But where must we stop? As regards individuals, where must the limits of severity and leniency lie? Dare we venture on more than in April, 1814, or can we venture on less?'

"'Make no mistake,' I interrupted, 'in April, 1814, as at the present moment, France desired rest, and rest alone: she loathed Bonaparte because of his ambitions and the calamities he brought upon her. The first illusion, and the first mistake of that period, was to think that the hatred of Bonaparte was inspired by the despotic use he made of his power. The nation is attached to liberal institutions only in so far as they protect and defend the interests which have come into being through the Revolution. It dispensed with them under Bonaparte because it had no fear for its interests; it demands them under a Bourbon because it thinks its interests perpetually threatened. Calm its fears and the problem is solved, but never lose sight of the fact that the new interests and the new men are the sole depositaries of power and brains in France. Even in the south, where you are told that they do not form a numerical majority, you may be quite certain that they have the relative superiority. In places where the new men are not in a majority they are always the most enterprising, resourceful and energetic. We must have them on our side or perish.'

"'The conflict,' resumed Talleyrand, 'is between what is legitimate and what is not. The whole of Europe is involved in it. As far as Europe is concerned the struggle is over and legitimacy has gained the day at the Congress

of Vienna and on the battlefield of Waterloo. But in France the contest is still continuing and cannot cease, I agree, until security is given to the illegitimate interests. But cannot we reach our goal without resorting to the most odious of the men of the Revolution, men whom the King's clemency spared in 1814 but who wanted to dethrone him this year ? '

" ' If all the interests of illegitimate origin,' I replied, ' had hoped that the King and his family would freely legitimize them, Louis XVIII would long ago have returned to the throne of his fathers. The Revolution would have been only too glad to obtain from him that sort of recognition it could not hope to obtain from a usurper. It would have readily sacrificed its authors and men whose hands were stained with crime. It would have consented to purge itself if ethics itself had sanctified its achievements. I have never understood why in 1814 you considered yourselves obliged to be more fastidious than Bonaparte in your choice of men to serve you, and why you left so many obscure senators—low relics of his favour—in possession of their seats in the House of Peers.

" ' Why did you restore Carnot to a post from which he had removed him ? Why did you restore to their rank generals like Lecourbe or Fournier, who were steeped in crime. It was with mingled feelings of melancholy and dismay that the nation received such concessions, which made it question your good faith. Simultaneously it saw men whose existence and names had hitherto been unknown to it given administrative and judicial office. In all quarters *émigrés*, or their friends who had stayed behind in France, were openly preferred and received all the appointments and patronage. The decoration of the Legion of Honour, the symbol of so much glory and reward for so many wounds, was handed out on such a

scale as to make it as cheap as dirt. From those who had won it with their sweat or their blood was taken the pension which was to support their old age, and the Cross of Saint-Louis alone seemed to command respect.

"'And then the mortifications heaped upon those who had come into possession of national property, and their exclusion from the King's military household, ultimately caused general revolt. Self-conceit and vanity were roused to fury, all the more so because material interests were also threatened. Things came to such a pass that it was no longer possible to soothe the former nor reassure the latter. By returning to our shores Bonaparte was simply taking advantage of a situation he had not created, of a conspiracy without conspirators to which all France was a party, a conspiracy in favour of a change, no matter what.'

"Talleyrand's face, as he listened to me, was a study. As always, thought was reflected there under the form of utter dejection; his loose, parted lips, his staring, empty gaze, the ungainly repose of his limbs, the helplessness of his whole person, gave him the appearance of being crushed under the weight of the thoughts I suggested to him.

"'What about the army?' he continued with a sigh. 'Must we take it back as we did last year, and as if it had not betrayed us?'

"'Last year,' I replied, 'nothing was left undone to estrange the army and make its reconciliation with the Bourbon cause impossible. It was thought that its account was squared by loading marshals with honours and favours. The army doesn't care a fig for marshals except those who command it. Its interests are everything and political opinions nothing. It will always be

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on the side which gives the best pay and rewards. So be careful not to return to the system of reduced cadres and the half-pay list. When you arrive you must disband all the corps—they're expecting it—and immediately reorganize them, using the same elements, but differently constituted and distributed. From military and civil employments you must exclude only the actual authors and abettors of March 20, if there are any. Don't cherish the idea that you can bring forward any charge against those who merely accepted the *fait accompli* and merely defended and served their country during the interregnum. You must let them go as innocent, take my word for it. Otherwise you'll have to pardon four-fifths of France, and you know that in politics you can never count on those you have pardoned. Three things distressed the army in 1814: forming the King's Military Household, changing the cockade, and distributing rank and decorations to persons it had never heard of. More than anywhere else, it is in the army that the inveterate hatred of the nobility is to be found.'

"'There's one last point,' M. de Talleyrand said, 'on which I want to consult you, I mean the changes to be made in the Charter. Should they precede or follow the King's return? Should we submit them to the Chambers and for acceptance by the nation?'

"'On no other point,' I replied, 'has public opinion expressed itself so strongly. It demands categorically that alterations should be made in the Charter and that it should be submitted, as altered, for acceptance by the nation. But this is where you cannot proceed with too much care and caution. You would ruin everything either by refusing or conceding everything. The force of public opinion, menace though it always is in France, must not be exaggerated. It is a peril only to those who refuse to

recognize it or allow themselves to be wholly controlled by it. The most popular course, no doubt, would be for the King to submit the Charter for examination by a national assembly or the two Chambers. Now I will not hesitate to predict that if the King did so his throne would be tottering once more; the revolutionary elements would again be in fresh ferment, and that fever of speculation which has been turning men's heads so long would be renewed in all its force. Parties and old factions, ambitions and claims, would get back their fury with all their hopes. The King has given the Charter; he must make changes in it and then present it, as modified, for individual acceptance by the French. You will find that of all the records of this kind so frequently opened during the Revolution, not one will contain so large a number of signatures; never will consent be so general, especially if you take advantage of the first moment and the enthusiasm produced by the King's return. Of the additions and alterations in the Charter the most obvious are: the unity of the ministries (which is not mentioned, though it should have been secured by formal provisions); ministerial responsibility, which is badly defined and inadequately guaranteed; the initiation and formulation of legislation, which is reserved to the King, though it should be in the hands of the Chambers, even in the interests of the royal prerogative; the hereditary title and constitution of the peerage, for which the Charter has done nothing; the sittings of the Peers' Chamber should be public; and lastly there should be an increase in the number of deputies, and a good electoral system.'

"'All right,' said Talleyrand, shaking my hand. 'We'll look into all this. I attached great importance to hearing your views before I saw Fouché. I'm going to talk to him, but first tell me what you think of him.'

" 'That he wants to be a minister of the King and secure a pardon from all parties.'

" 'He will be ultimately,' replied Talleyrand, 'but I want him to be kept in doubt, and to dangle the plum before his eyes so that he will accept our conditions instead of trying to impose his on us. I'll have another word with you before we separate.'

" On leaving me, Talleyrand went to Fouché and talked to him in a low voice for a few minutes; as they talked together their manner became less restrained and their faces brightened. They called up the Duke of Wellington, as if to make him a trustee of their mutual overtures and promises. Then they joined the party.

" We sat down and there began a conference at which Talleyrand, Fouché, the Duke of Wellington and Pozzo were the principal, or rather the only, speakers. This conference was obviously the consequence of what had just passed between Talleyrand, the Duc d'Otranto and the Duke of Wellington. The latter spoke much and warmly of the necessity of punishing the real culprits.

" 'It would be the first time,' he cried, 'that a throne has been overturned and set up again, a king betrayed, driven out and restored, without a single example being made to satisfy the rights of justice and frighten any who might be tempted to try the same crimes.'

" Fouché obstinately defended the alleged criminals of March 20, such as Ney, arguing that it was in the interests of Louis XVIII and his policy to forgive everything. In answer to the contentions of the Duke of Wellington he brought out the revolutionary chatter which is all his own, talking of the revolution of March 20 as if it were a joke, a schoolboy trick which cannot be forgotten too soon. He knew better than anyone what the Duke was bound to think of it, and his bad faith was patent. In fact, the

object of everything he said was not to convince anyone but simply to retain the confidence of his party.

"I was tickled at the simple-mindedness of the Duke of Wellington, who argued vehemently without suspecting Fouché's private motives. Talleyrand, who could understand them all right, supported the Duke of Wellington in the discussion, but only casually, for the sake of form, being a man who knew quite well what Fouché wanted and how it would all end. The whole question boiled down to the single point whether the Duc d'Otranto, in order to become the King's Minister, would agree to break with his party and agree to the policy of severity which was being demanded of him. It was clear that he would argue as much as possible about each of his actions, that he wanted to appear forced into doing those he could not get out of, and lastly that he was hoping to do under the King what he had done under Bonaparte, i.e., save his popularity from the wreck by persuading people that he saved them from far more evils than he caused them.

"All this time Valence was champing his bit and occasionally dropping an angry remark. Beurnonville tried to stammer out something, but seldom managed to finish, though he succeeded in conveying to us that his advice was to shoot or depart half the army and half France. Pozzo talked sensibly, as was his wont. He displayed that moderation without weakness which comes of long views and great sagacity.

"We separated without coming to any conclusion. Talleyrand took me aside again.

"'You haven't said anything,' he said.

"'Of course not,' I replied. 'My part was to listen, and I took good care not to go outside it. But if you want to know what I think, it is this. There is no doubt that

the events which accompanied and followed March 20 presuppose the existence of a large number of miscreants; but don't let public opinion cool. If you delay your punishments the slightest severities will be regarded as odious. Keep the number of criminals as small as possible and thank Heaven if you fail to catch a single one. In the case of those whom you could not and would not condemn, but may be thought too dangerous to leave in France, if Europe is so minded let her banish them from her shores before she lays down arms. Once more let me warn you to have all this done within a week, and then reserve all your force and self-possession for those with an inclination to revive a single moment of the past, or to reaction in one direction or the other.'

"Pozzo came up and interrupted us, and we separated. I took back to Paris for publication in the '*Journal des Débats*' an article dictated by Talleyrand in which fresh elections and the maintenance of the Chambers were announced and the principal changes proposed in the Charter were indicated.

"This time we travelled in silence. Not one of us in our carriage was asleep, but each was going over everything he had just heard and thinking more especially of his own position. Valence—it was not so soon after dinner now—contemplated his with more sorrow than anger. Fouché seemed worried.

"The next day, July 8, a proclamation of the Government Commission announced that its functions had come to an end, the Chambers were dissolved and the King would make his entry into Paris on the 9th. With Fouché I found Alexandre de Boisgelin, *Chef de la Légion* of the National Guard, who has just closed the doors of the Representative Chamber. The more ardent spirits among them had protested against such an act of violence,

and met at the house of M. de la Fayette to continue their deliberations.

"At length, on July 9, the King returned to Paris in such a state of agitation as to the manner of his reception—thanks to Fouché—that he kept the public in the dark up to the last moment as to the hour and route he had selected. Even the Municipal Council was not taken into his confidence. The deputation of this council, of which I was a member, wandered from one barrier to another, and by sheer good luck stopped at that through which the King entered.

"Fouché had had him told that the white cockades of his suite and the cheers of the bodyguard would provoke scenes the consequences of which could not be foretold. Instead of that, the fact is that children greeting a long-absent and dearly loved father could not have displayed wilder and more happy excitement than the assembled crowd displayed on catching sight of their sovereign. Jesus Christ was not better received in Jerusalem than the King was in Paris. The welcome to him was a welcome to peace, the restoration of order and the end of storms. The joy of the moment alone was realized; men's minds had not yet turned towards the future.

"Immediately afterwards, however, a sense of uneasiness supervened and the disposition of the public changed. But that first day of the restoration of the Bourbons presented the finest if also the most curious of spectacles. It was as if the whole population of Paris had been replaced since the previous evening.

"Where were the Federates, that angry threatening crowd? What had become of the National Guard and the bourgeoisie, a bourgeoisie so hostile to the Bourbons? One cry, one thought alone, came from the lips of all. 'Long live the King' they shouted in

frenzied repetition, 'Long live our Father, our good King!'

"The Municipal Council gave an address of welcome at the barrier, and the Prefect, Chabroi, restored to his post, made a speech. The King made a sensible and appropriate reply, and on seeing me gave me a kindly nod. He was extremely pleased to see how thoroughly Fouché had misled himself or his sovereign and began to think him not so indispensable. The confidence of the royal family and the *émigrés* knew no bounds. From that moment they vowed the ruin not only of the Duc d'Otranto, but even of Talleyrand and all who opposed reaction. It is certain that there was something about what was taking place before their eyes which was calculated to confuse the judgment of even the most sagacious minds. Everything was bowing before the dread of the foreigners, and the voice of discontent was hushed before the fear of giving any pretext for the partition of France. Paris and public opinion were still the same. Actions and outward manifestations alone had changed sides. Those who had kept silence just before—without indicating that it cost them very much to do so—now recovered their voices and spoke only too loud. On the other hand those whose outcry had been so violent now preserved a melancholy and ominous silence.

"The foreigners had no regard even for outward decencies and inflicted humiliations of every kind. The result was a universal, sullen anger and growing unpopularity for the King and royal family.

"All the public functionaries and officers of the National Guard who were functioning on March 20 were restored to their posts. Dessoles, who had recovered the command of the National Guard, had no difficulty in making it resume the white cockade. But the vital act of this

period, by which Fouché thought he was establishing his authority on a permanent basis, was the decree establishing the constitution of the Council of Ministers and Privy Council. The princes were excluded from the former and relegated to the latter. That was the *coup d'état*. But Talleyrand, as if exhausted by the effort to bring this about, abandoned his Privy Council almost as soon as he had created it and forgot to select the members and define their functions. He gave himself the presidency of the Council of Ministers with the Department of Foreign Affairs. Louis had the Finance Department; Pasquier, Justice; Fouché, Police; Jaucourt, the Admiralty; and War went to Marshal Gruvion Saint-Cyr.

"Talleyrand postponed appointing a Minister of the Interior. He was inclined to select me, but dared not do so. While passing through Troyes the Duc de Richelieu learned from '*Le Moniteur*' that he had been made Minister of the King's Household: he declined the honour, notwithstanding all the pressure put upon him. His refusal did not displease the King, who would not have cared to see him restored to a ministry established *ad hoc*, a ministry he had already decided to dismiss as soon as he dared. From that moment Talleyrand felt that M. de Richelieu was held in reserve as his successor, and vented upon him all the hatred of which his nature was capable.

"Such was the composition of a ministry which lasted for a very short time and left memories which are anything but glorious behind it. It was in a position to save France, and yet, at the moment at which I am writing, men are asking if it has not ruined her. No one is in a better position than I to tell its story. On public affairs *only* Talleyrand admitted me to the closest confidence, and Pasquier did nothing without consulting me.

"But before I begin the record of the mistakes we have not yet ceased to expiate, I shall try to give a portrait of the men who made them. Talleyrand and Fouché have already been described by their actions in these memoirs, but it seems to me I am under a duty to gather together all these scattered fragments and preserve the features of these two famous persons.

"No man has been judged more variously and with more extravagance or injustice than the Prince de Talleyrand. Those who have only met him fear him; those who know him, or are in touch with him, or depend upon him, all like him. He has more cronies than friends, and these cronies are frequently his accomplices. The public, which judges him by the scale of the events with which his name is associated, have given him a colossal reputation.

"M. de Talleyrand's life is written on his face. His complexion is pasty, his flesh lifeless and loose; his look is bold and haughty, though his eyes are dead and his mouth, a unique mouth perhaps, expresses excess, satiety and contempt all at once. When he moves forward on his curiously misshapen legs—legs which seem to be dragged along by him rather than to support him—he reminds one of those fabulous monsters which are half man and half snake. He maintains an obstinate silence on all occasions when he is doubtful about obtaining the effect he would like to produce, but the moment he feels confident of pleasing and getting his own way his manner becomes gracious and charming without ceasing to be dignified and tasteful. He is a combination of *grand seigneur*, woman, abbé and cat; with the abbé and the cat uppermost.

"Intimate association with him is full of charm, though one never feels at ease with him. He tells a story and

chatters on with inimitable grace, and pokes fun at people and foils their schemes with the art of a master. His banter is ingenious and his wit subtle and pointed, but when he wants to make it forceful and bitter he becomes brutal and coarse. He hardly ever argues except under the impulse of anger or self-interest. Being destitute of conviction, principles and real education, he has neither the wish nor the capacity to uphold anything. As opinions and circumstances alike are only a means to success or an opportunity of self-enrichment to him, he regards them from that debased point of view whenever they cross his path. It is thus that his corrupted soul has nourished his natural idleness by enabling him to dispense with thought and all serious study—in a word all those operations of the intellect the object of which is to seek after the truth. His mind more or less resembles those bodies from which no sound can be extracted. The ideas of others enter it like seed falling into mud; they are buried and never sprout. His taste is less sound than refined, his critical faculty is fertile and any author should think himself fortunate who can consult him on his works. The hue of his complexion and his physical movements are strong points of resemblance between him and cold-blooded animals. He is fond of everything that excites the nerves, Madeira wine, scandal, spices and high play. It might be said that he is blasé and begins where other people end. Nobility of soul, kindness, love and tenderness, are words he understands and uses with the most amazing aptitude, although he has never known the sentiments they represent.

"He loves himself alone. In Napoleon's time he married the most beautiful and stupid of kept women, yet at fifty years he separated from her in order to become the open and unabashed lover of a very young

woman* . . . a woman too young to be able to resist all his charms. Intoxicated with his success, but extremely anxious to please his young mistress, he showed the whole world he was under her thumb.

"No one is so easily and completely prejudiced, favourably or unfavourably, as M. de Talleyrand. No one is a worse judge of the merit of others. There is no object or individual on which he is not prejudiced, one way or the other. Like all men, and perhaps more than most men, he has his contradictions and inconsistencies. He is considered, and very properly, the most subtle of men, yet there are few who can be duped more easily. His mind is flexible and cunning: he is confident when he lies, he gives way and recovers his pose at the right moment. All this makes him a very clever negotiator, quite capable of deceiving others; yet it in no way prevents his being deceived in turn. The fact is that in his public and private life he never avoided any trap which was set for him.

"At one moment reserved and cautious, at another carried away by his spirits, and frequently indiscreet as well, after his disgrace I have heard him, in the presence of others, call Bonaparte a coward and 'Robespierre's tail,' and after the King came back and he was dismissed I have heard him crack jokes of the most pointed kind at that monarch's expense, even before a full company at table. He can no more refrain from uttering some *bon mot* which relieves his angry feelings than keep a secret which tickles him, or he feels tempted to divulge. And even at a time when he was supposed to be unable to write a word I used to see him engaged in writing memoirs, which gave proof of exceptional talent. As for speaking in public, he has many a time proved to me in the Council

* Three words deleted.

of State that he was absolutely incapable of it. When questioned by Napoleon he used to answer in monosyllables, and even those were as much as he could manage.

"His morals were even worse than the popular idea of them. With him vice has become a habit which has suffocated his natural instincts to such a degree that he has reached the stage of simply preferring evil to good. He stops at nothing to increase his immense wealth; when that is his object nothing counts, and he lets nothing stand in his way. Yet, far from being miserly, he spends his money like his brains: aimlessly and without counting the cost. He lives lavishly and lets himself be robbed through his careless indifference. After giving his day to the sort of scum by whom he is surrounded he fills his house in the evening with foreigners and fellow-countrymen of the highest rank, and becomes a model of the greatest elegance.

"In business he can be business-like, though never serious. Without confidence in his luck or his own powers, and incapable of continuous thinking or hard work, he has none of the qualities of the statesman.

"In a word his moral make-up is explained entirely by his life. It is as if his spirit bore the imprint of all the modes of existence through which he has passed. In him one finds a mixture of the *grand seigneur* and the revolutionary, the regency roué and the court prelate, refinement and grossness—the friend of Lauzun, the companion of Montrond, Barras' crony, Bonaparte's slave, and the minister of a Bourbon.

"Such was the leader of the new ministry, a man who was distasteful to the King and prince whose cause he had been one of the first to desert when the Revolution began; an abomination to priests and the pious; an object of

suspicion to the new interests which he had more than abandoned in 1814, and of loathing to the revolutionaries and Bonapartists, many of whom he had betrayed.

"Fouché's position was very different. Talleyrand had in his favour the prestige not only of immense cleverness but of the services he had rendered the King in 1814, and at the Congress of Vienna in 1815. Fouché also was supposed to be very clever, but what were his services? And he had neither birth nor family behind him. Even those who put him in the ministry were extremely sorry to be reduced to such lamentable necessity. Yet he had found how to make himself indispensable to the two parties. The Royalists were afraid of being massacred if he did not keep an eye on their enemies, and the revolutionaries asked him to save them from the advance of reaction, though this did not prevent the former from regarding him as a wretch who deserved the most infernal tortures, and the latter as a traitor whom they would bring to justice the moment they could do without him.

"If Talleyrand is the most revolutionary of gentlemen, Fouché is the most gentlemanly of revolutionaries.

"His wealth, a certain haughtiness in giving orders, a familiarity which never goes the length of inspiring fear, a certain heedless levity he brings to his work, and even to crime, would enable him to be taken for a *grand seigneur* if they were not combined with bourgeois habits, a gaiety without refinement, and particularly the absence of that tact and sense of the proprieties which well-bred people learn in their cradles.

"His whole personality is evidence of the passions of his stormy life; he is tall, has frail limbs, a dry skin, very quick movements, a keen expression, delicate features, piercing, blood-shot eyes, and hair the colour of an albino's.

There is something fierce, lithe and agile about him which reminds one of a panther.

"Seen at closer quarters, however, one marvels that he could ever have been cruel. A good husband, a most affectionate father, and above all a great friend and neither vindictive nor spiteful, it seems impossible to account for the excesses which have disgraced his career. It is true that his is a fiery temperament, that his first impulses are impetuous and violent and his imagination is vivid and fickle, but, if there are no bad acts he is incapable of committing, he can also do good ones and even take pleasure in them.

"His life falls into two parts. In the first his object was to make his way and succeed, in the second to secure forgiveness and keep what he had won. Like all other statesmen his egoism circumscribed his horizon. As he worked for himself alone he did not look far enough into the future. Always ready to compromise with anything threatening him, for a very long time he has asked nothing of fate except to be allowed to keep what he has got. Under Louis XVIII, for example, he yearned for office as the only means of escaping exile and proscription. Otherwise he was indiscreet, idle, a chatterbox and liar, incapable of conceiving a plan and still more incapable of carrying it out, with far more resolution than courage, and less a dare-devil than a braggart. In short he must be put in the front rank of those who will give our century a reputation for having men in no way on a par with events, men who always did things rather than design them.

"The next in order of importance after Fouché in the ministry was Louis, originally priest and councillor to the *Parlement*, then *émigré*, then Councillor of State under Napoleon and Finance Minister after the return of the

King. Talleyrand and the Abbé de Montesquieu praised his financial gifts to the skies. He had resided in England for a long time and brought away notions of the credit of nations which were not as yet widespread on the Continent. 'England first and all the time' was his maxim, and when anyone protested, his only answer was an insult. With a prejudiced and limited intelligence, a hard and violent temperament, contradiction irritated him all the more as he never submitted his views to the test of a frank discussion. He never listened to anyone, followed his own ideas, developed them, or rather repeated them *ad nauseam* —dropping his voice more and more in progressively cutting tones until he was reduced to mere swearing— the only time in which it could be said that he talked real French.

"It may well be imagined that with such characteristics the Abbé Louis was not exactly fitted to deal with men. He also had a genius for getting himself loathed. On the most intimate terms with the Duc d'Otranto, he admired him as the paragon of statesmen, and used to say that the masterpiece of politics and the triumph of philosophy was to see a regicide become a minister under the Bourbons. No one can understand what made the Abbé Louis emigrate, as he has the instincts, manners, habits and language of the ideal revolutionary.

"There would have been no better minister than Marshal Gouvion Saint-Cyr had it not been for his incurable laziness and incredible mulishness. In my opinion he was the only member of this ministry who had an adequate knowledge of his departmental work and combined all the qualities necessary to make a success of it.

"Lastly there was Pasquier* . . . . . .

. . . . . .

* Two lines missing.

Nature had not made him for such great adventures, and no one but himself could have foretold them of him* . .

. . . . . .

"Be that as it may, he owed to his extreme self-confidence the very valuable advantage of always seeming at his best. In the Chamber as in the drawing-room he spoke with ease and assurance, but lacked elegance, precision and accuracy. His ignorance of the rules of grammar made him incapable of writing, though he said one day in my presence that if he took up writing he would have all the richness and harmony of style of a Buffon. It is very rare for anyone to be so destitute of imagination and warmth as he is. His mind seems to share the aridity of his body. Both lack flesh, joints and fabric. But his quickness of mind and adaptability are splendid and admirable. He swiftly and easily grasps the point put to him, dexterously adopts it, makes it his own and boldly swears that it was his from the start. It is this side of him which makes him fitted for high office. Energetic and yet idle, he knows how to make others work more than he works himself, and personally works rather than applies himself to work. He has successively abandoned all the friendships of his youth: the only friends he has are those made for him by his position.† . . . . . .

"I was about to accuse him of selfishness, but it is only a question of personality. I have never known him to do a service for the sake of service, or oblige anyone for the sake of obliging that particular individual. It even seems as if he almost disliked giving pleasure when he obliges anyone.

"The Royalists viewed his appointment as a minister with concern. They could never forgive him for having directed the Police Department in Paris under Napoleon.

* Twelve lines missing. † One line missing.

Nor had the opponents of the Restoration any more confidence in him. Completely overshadowed by Talleyrand and Fouché he owed all his importance to his aptitude for business. In that respect he was supreme in the ministry, as Jaucourt was even less a business man than a statesman, and Talleyrand had given him the Navy only because he wanted to have one of his tools in the Cabinet, or at any rate a man who did not hamper him in any way."

CHAPTER XII

Count Molé's motives for returning to public life.—Decazes.—Talleyrand's toilette. —Contrast between the private lives of Talleyrand and Fouché.—Evenings at Talleyrand's.—The ministry's difficult position.—Talleyrand's mistaken policy.— The appointment of prefects.—Clumsy dismissals.—Circular to the prefects.— Lack of homogeneity in the Ministry.—Dissolution of the 1814 Chamber.— The electoral colleges.—Count Molé criticizes the changes made in their composition.—Saint Helena.—Count Molé's review of Napoleon's career.

CHAPTER XII

AS has been seen, on the first return of the Bourbons in 1814, Count Molé had been not only thrust on one side, so far as public activities were concerned, but also visited with a species of ostracism by the new society which followed in the train of Louis XVIII. On the return from Elba he had not wished to associate himself with an enterprise he considered disastrous to his country, and he had only accepted a post—and a minor post at that—because he did not want, by refusing, to seem to be deserting the man he had served in his prosperous times. In 1815 he had worked for the King without any other motive than his conviction that the restoration of legitimacy could alone prevent the dismemberment or partition of France.

Destitute of ambition, despite what is said to the contrary, he had no inclination whatever to be in office again. His natural contemplative instincts and taste for independence, against which he had revolted in his youth when he asked Napoleon to appoint him a Councillor of State, resumed their sway, and a certain feeling of weariness also urged him to retire from public affairs.

His bad health was another reason for his desire for a rest. He had put it forward when refusing the important posts Napoleon had offered him in 1815, and his refusal was justified. The effects of the privations of all kinds to which he had been subjected during the Revolution, and cruel physical sufferings, "tortures which let me neither live nor die," afflicted him incessantly. During one of his visits to Vichy he sent Dr. Lucas, who was attending him, a written record of his health since his earliest years;

taking all the days on which he had no physical pain he said they would not amount to a month.

"All the illnesses which had tortured my best years," he says, "gave me a feeling of lassitude and melancholy which made me anxious to flee the world and still more its complications.

"I was already feeling that my youth was slipping away from me. My strength was waning, my outlook becoming more gloomy, and the circle of my tastes and pleasures was contracting."

"If I say so and repeat it," he writes elsewhere, "it is not solely for the pleasure of complaining; it is because those who will judge me should know it and not forget it, for health like mine explains many things, even those it does not excuse. A man who has received such health from Heaven can call his wife and children, servants and friends, and even his enemies, to his death-bed and address them like this: 'Pity me, you who have not perpetually been in pain; forgive me, and do not judge me too harshly.'"

But he re-entered politics all the same. He realized, in fact, that it was the only course open to him if he wished to shake off the kind of jealous suspicion of him which he owed to his swift rise to fame under Napoleon, and to emerge from the isolation which had been such a sorrow to him in 1814.

"Speaking personally," he says, "my position left me with one regret only, that of being unable to get rid of the kind of proscription to which I had been subjected in 1814 without my returning to political life. But it was my fate to be plunged deeper and deeper into public affairs the less I liked them, and to be increasingly accused of ambition the less I deserved the charge."

There were other reasons which brought him back to public life.

Friendships and associations which had been broken by divergencies of opinion, an affection which he prized, destroyed as the result of events then in progress, had left a great void in his life. From certain passages in his memoirs, which would not be in place here, one can gather the bitterness they caused him from the amount of space he devotes and the importance he attaches to them. It was not only to make his public life known and understood that he wrote his memoirs; it was also to show himself as he was, or thought he was, and take those who would subsequently read his work to witness his sufferings and struggles.

"In any case I must admit," he wrote at the beginning of his memoirs, "that a much more powerful motive drives my pen and inspires me to write this portion of my story. I am urged by the need I feel to commit to paper sorrows for which I ought to blush at my age, though they will accompany me to my grave.

"Readers, I abase myself. I value pity less than sympathy. If you are not interested in my sufferings, at least acknowledge my extreme frankness."

"My mind always meets approaching evils half-way," he says further on, "and it was overwhelmed at the thought of the solitude it anticipated. All the springs from which I was accustomed to draw had dried up; all sources of interest had vanished and nowhere could I find an adequate reason for taking the trouble to live. It required all the force of my principles and the greatest effort of intellect to throw off this state of mind. I recognized that solitude and I were incompatible and that study, meditation and contemplation would be equally bad for me. Noble and elevated ideas do not cure afflictions of the spirit; hard work, which cannot be evaded, is the only remedy for this sort of bitter melancholy, and there

are no distractions for the really unhappy man save those which are imposed by duty."

To procure a diversion, fill the void in his life and fight this devil of doubt and despair which had fastened on his mind, he decided to return to politics, and immediately after the formation of Talleyrand's ministry he accepted the post of Director of Roads and Bridges.

"I threw myself into public affairs," he continues, "and gave all my time and powers to men and matters for which I had felt neither inclination nor respect. The reader will deign to remember that it was otherwise during the six years in which I was absorbed in high matters of policy and administration. Now, as I left my work and laid down my burden each evening, I had only myself to fall back upon. My tired mind knew where to find rest, and my spirit refreshment; I faced work, annoyances, opposition and injustice, with the reflection that this, on which I had staked my happiness, was my whole, sole, life. Memories were agonizing: I had to steel my heart against their insidious sweetness and perform prodigies of self-control.

"As a matter of fact my time was fully taken up with business. Pasquier for the time being combined the portfolios of the Interior and Justice, and he was always consulting me. He carried this new burden with considerable skill. One of his gifts is that he never seems flustered or overweighted. He got out of the difficulty, it is true, by not doing his work in either capacity, but he deceived all those who were not at the closest of close quarters with him. I had made him take Barante as his Secretary-General for the Interior, and he had chosen Guizot for the Ministry of Justice. Barante and Guizot did his work. To be just, it must be admitted that he usefully polished up theirs. Both of them were far better

informed than he, but his advantage over them lay in his judgment and a certain business tact which cannot be acquired. This it is which makes a 'ministerial' person; its absence will prevent Guizot and Barante from ever becoming such.*

"Every morning I gave a few hours to the administration of roads and bridges of which I had had so long experience that it was child's play to me. The rest of my day I spent largely in conversation with the ministers.

"It was then that I made the acquaintance of a man whose destinies I had been far from recognizing. I had often met M. Decazes in the Emperor's reign.† . . .

. . . . . .

"He had displayed a certain ability in the Imperial Court of Paris, of which he was a judge. He had come into the public eye particularly by the distinguished success with which he had presided over the Assize Courts. On March 20 he had displayed the greatest zeal for the royal cause, putting himself at the head of a company of volunteers who offered to fight against Bonaparte. On his return the King appointed him Prefect of Police. As M. de Talleyrand did not know to whom to give this important post, Louis suggested Decazes, with whom he was very friendly.‡ . . . . . Such were the beginnings of a gentleman who will play so important a part in our annals.

"I met him every evening at Talleyrand's; he was not slow to discover the prestige I enjoyed there, and soon invited me to his Thursday dinners at which Barante, Guizot, Saint-Tricq, Mounier, Anglès, Portalis and Dubois were also to be found. Sometimes Pozzo di Borgo came too. All steps to be taken and courses to be followed

* Yet Guizot subsequently became a minister under the July Monarchy.
† Seven lines deleted.
‡ Half a line deleted.

were discussed here; it was like a second ministry, perhaps not less influential than the real one. It was patent that Decazes was aspiring to become the patron of all men who mattered. Fouché was not the last to discover this fact, and it annoyed him all the more because Decazes worked with the King every day and was progressing in his favour. M. de Talleyrand did not even deign to enquire about all this. I went to his house practically every morning and evening: by 'morning' I mean about eleven o'clock, when he was getting up. I owe to posterity a description of this truly historical *toilette*. It will give some idea of manners and fashions we shall never see again, and a method of transacting business which will not recur.*

"Between eleven o'clock and twelve, M. de Talleyrand rose from bed and went into his study, where he was awaited by all the English and French papers, which he did not read, Madame Edmond de Périgord and Madame Alexandre de Talleyrand, whom he suffered to kiss him, two or three valets, his barber, and those of his familiars who had preceded his rising. Swathed in flannel from head to foot, enveloped in an eiderdown of grey taffeta, and his head crowned with several night-caps, he slowly dragged himself to a mirror, where he fixed dead, lustreless eyes on his pale and haggard face. Spread out on a table before him were all his toilet sets. He then proceeded to an operation the sight of which was positively nauseating. A valet held a large bowl, filled with water, under his chin, wet a sponge and passed it over his face. Then, thrusting his nose into the bowl, he forced up it an incredible quantity of water, which returned through his mouth with a splash.

* This passage from "Count Molé's Memoirs," with the description of Talleyrand getting up, was published in the March 1, 1913, issue of the "*Revue des Nations.*"

"These ablutions and cascades lasted for more than a quarter of an hour, during which time his room filled with most eminent people, of whose presence he did not seem to be aware. It was not even customary to say good morning to him, or to be the first to speak. Often it was only after the lapse of half an hour that a nod, or a word uttered in sepulchral tones and usually with his back turned, acquainted some visitor with the fact that he had been observed. On some occasions even this nod or word was awaited in vain, and it was only when he was on the point of retiring, or going through the door, that a 'Good morning, So-and-so!' came to console the courtier or supplicant whose patience was giving out. Those who came and went were business men, like the banker, Doumerc, the contractors, Ouvrard and Montrond; political intriguers such as Lahorie and Vitrolles; ministers and officials such as Louis, Pasquier, d'Hauterive and myself; his doctor, Brègnet; the poet, Lemercier; and his brothers and friends, Archambaud, Bozon, Jaucourt and La Tour du Pin. Among the ambassadors, Pozzo, who has not always as much dignity as sense, was the only one to appear at this function.

"The first ablutions, which I have described, were succeeded by a foot washing, during which his hair was dressed. He produced the claws, which do duty for feet in his case, for all of us to see, and with a contemptuous cynicism which always surprised me. While he was being combed and having his feet dried he told stories and made jokes which were incessantly interrupted by his signing documents, and sometimes issuing an important order. He then rose to dress and began a sort of promenade which lasted more than an hour, and during which he changed his shirt and put on his trousers before the ladies present without even thinking of turning his

back. The amount of flannel and number of vests of every kind which he puts on is incredible ; a valet, carrying his shirt or a vest, followed him closely in his hesitating and tottering parade, waiting for a suitable chance of getting his arms through the sleeves. It was always the second sleeve which presented the greatest difficulty. He had barely got one arm through when he usually began to gesticulate, or tell a story, or discuss some matter.

" These moments were the busiest and hardest of the day. In the Council of Ministers and at diplomatic conferences he listened, wiped his face, and said nothing. And so far as time given to ministerial work was concerned, he spent it signing his name and making fun of d'Hauterive or any other of his underlings whom he regarded as a butt for his wit.

" When I left him and went to call on Fouché I was struck by the difference between their habits. I always found Fouché busy. His system was to do his ministerial business as much as possible by conversation, but he never talked about anything except that business and seemed devoured by an energy which gave him no rest. His sole diversions were walking and the company of his children. The latter were allowed to enter his study at any moment ; they were always coming in to kiss him, ask how he was getting on, bring him a glass of orangeade, and tell him not to tire himself.

" At midnight I went back to Talleyrand. Frequently he never appeared himself before one or two o'clock, as he stayed to play cards at the house of Princess Tichwitz, the Duchesse de Courlande, or some other lady of what he called his old seraglio. He would frequently allow the Duke and Duchess of Wellington, Prince Metternich and the whole diplomatic corps to assemble in his drawing-room and keep them waiting for a very long time. The Duchesse

de Luynes, Princess Tichwitz, old Crawford, General Hulot and Rear-Admiral Dumanoir were usually seated round a creps table on which M. de Talleyrand threw gold pieces from time to time.

"He would stay up until four o'clock in the morning, sometimes playing a game of creps, sometimes settling the fate of France, sometimes making love to some Englishwoman or Madame ——.* It is then, so it is said, that he did all he could to induce the latter to become the mistress of the Duke of Wellington. Ambition triumphed over love and he consented to share her with the Duke, with the object of controlling him through her. But Wellington had been advised of his secret designs and steeled himself against her wiles, so that Madame —— got nothing for her pains, which were said to have got as far as violence. These evenings, or rather the portions of the night thus spent, were very pleasant, almost to the point of fatigue. There I saw the most vital interests discussed by the most influential and celebrated men of all the states of Europe.

"The position of the ministry got worse and worse. It may be admitted that no ministry was ever faced by greater difficulties; perhaps the greatest was an inevitable unpopularity and the impossibility of winning the respect and confidence of the nation. Restored to power by the foreigners, it was held responsible for all that the nation had suffered and continued to suffer from their greed or pride. The present evils seemed to point to even greater evils in future. The Allies, forgetting their promises, became more exacting every day. While protesting that they would not interfere in our business they claimed to settle the smallest detail of our internal affairs.

"The English Press was loudly demanding the partition

* One word deleted.

of France, and the Emperor Alexander himself, all but thinking it necessary for the tranquillity of Europe, was seriously considering the matter. It was not in his own character that M. de Talleyrand could find the firmness and dignity required to cope with and triumph over such a situation, so he submitted feebly to the full weight of the yoke and did not venture to do even the simplest administrative act without consulting the European Congress.

"He had always borne his own shame too comfortably to feel the present humiliation of his country very deeply. Be that as it may, his mistaken policy had lost him the natural ally of France, I mean Russia, through the secret treaty with England and Austria which he had so imprudently signed in 1814. He had thereby made Alexander his personal enemy, and entered into a binding undertaking to throw himself into the arms of England, in other words the only power all of whose interests were irreconcilable with ours. From this time onward I began to find him older and more feeble, and his administration of the Interior was marked only by his mistakes. His weakness and inefficiency were far worse than I anticipated. The plan I had made him accept at Neuilly seemed to have entirely vanished from his memory, and all he did was to make concession after concession to all the political parties. Instead of pointing out his errors his colleagues made mistakes of their own which were just as egregious as his.

"In any case not a soul was ever at his ease with him. Pasquier claimed to be quite at home with him. With that end in view he used to call on him in the morning, at an hour when he is sometimes alone. I often made a third on these occasions. Pasquier sank into the depths of a chair, crossed his legs, stretched his arms, ended up

with his feet on the mantelpiece, and went off amazed that anyone could feel awkward in Talleyrand's presence, though he had not ventured to offer a single remark.

"It was only with women that Talleyrand was natural and at his ease; his diffidence and restraint with all men, which he communicated to them, was extremely prejudicial to the success of all his undertakings.

"Thus the unity which was announced in the Cambrai proclamation, and had been the subject of so many promises from the ministry, was far from being attained. The ministers were not so much disunited as detached; they lacked a centre, a rallying-point, one directing mind and will to keep them together. It is not enough to constitute a ministry of members whose political complexion is practically the same. Unity is something more than homogeneity: it can only be obtained by a real head. In a word it means simply the domination of one man.

"M. de Talleyrand was the head only in name. Fouché distrusted him and was endeavouring to acquire more influence. Each minister took his own line, kept his own private opinions, and administered his department without telling his colleagues anything or adapting his actions to one broad common plan. Even after a revolution such as ours, Louis treated the whole art of government as consisting of the science of credit, or rather stock-jobbing; Fouché had the knack of managing all the parties and making the wolf and lamb live in peace together. All that Gouvion Saint-Cyr aspired to was the liberation of our territory and the reorganization of the army. The satisfaction of being a minister was all that Pasquier cared about* . . . . . .

"His first task was to appoint all the prefects. He asked me for my list: I contented myself with taking

* One line deleted.

his. It was very mixed, and revealed a great desire to please all parties, particularly the Court. I made few suggestions, as I saw at once that they would be useless. It is my principle to adapt my advice to the strength of will of the individual to whom it is offered. But I prevented a certain number of bad choices. Frédéric d'Houdetot had been sent to Caen without being consulted. I looked after the interests of this good friend, and made no objection. It seemed to me right that the King should employ him on his return so long as he could leave when he became tired of his post. Fiévée asked to be returned to Nevers, but his request was refused.

"The two most striking appointments were those of de Bondy and Stanislas de Girardin to the prefectures of Metz and Rouen. The former had been Prefect of Paris during the Hundred Days, and was supposed to be devoted to Bonaparte. De Girardin, who had remained Prefect of Rouen during that period and was a member of the Representative Chamber, was accused of having issued a violent proclamation in his department in favour of Bonaparte. These two appointments made the Court and the princes furious. They roundly abused the ministry, and particularly the minister who had made them. Pasquier was frightened: his only idea was to revoke them, and he was awaiting an opportunity of doing so with some semblance of justification. That opportunity soon presented itself in the case of Bondy, as some letters of his, which were absolutely calculated to compromise him, were opened in the post. Girardin was dismissed without any legal proceedings on the ground of the alleged proclamation during the Hundred Days. He was not even given a chance of explaining, and it was in vain that he subsequently proved that the proclamation, instead of being issued on his own initiative, had been

sent to him from Paris with orders to insert it in the departmental newspaper. Nothing could save him from being sacrificed to the ultra-Royalists.

"From this example my readers may judge how the ministry was losing respect every day and earning the increasing hatred and contempt of all parties. The Royalists openly accused it of treachery and its opponents charged it with signal cowardice. Having appointed his prefects, Pasquier proposed to give them their cue, so to speak, by a circular. He commissioned Barante to draw it up, reserving the right to revise it. Barante's part of this circular was neither firm nor dignified enough; Pasquier's was even more negligible, and remarkable only for its bad grammar and mistakes of French. Very different language would have been required to secure any sort of harmonious action from this collection of administrators selected from all parties and men of all opinions. Thus it came about that each prefect was an isolated unit; they corresponded directly with the princes, governed and administered according to their personal ideas and opinions, and in many cases adopted an attitude of formal opposition to the ministry.

"Appointments to the judicial bench were made in the same way. As at this time the office of judge was more or less humble and inconspicuous, Pasquier thought he could appoint ultra-Royalists to these posts without the Constitutionalists knowing, or without annoying them too much. The circular he addressed to the royal courts was certainly not lacking either in dignity or frankness. It was worded by Guizot and had escaped his revisions. He trusted in Guizot far more than Barante, because with the former his vanity was in much safer keeping.

"The public was impatiently waiting to know what course would be taken with regard to the convocation of

the Chambers and the new elections. The 1814 Chamber was dissolved by an ordinance of July 15. Simultaneously the electoral colleges of the departments and *arrondissements* were summoned just as they were, i.e., as they had existed under Bonaparte. The colleges of the *arrondissement* were to present candidates from which the colleges of the departments were to take at least half the deputies. The total number of deputies was increased from two hundred and sixty-two to three hundred and ninety-five. As provided by old decrees, the prefects could attach to the colleges a certain number of members of the Legion of Honour. Lastly, fourteen articles of the Charter were submitted for revision by the Chambers.

"The principal authors of this plan were Pasquier and Barante. I disliked it and criticized it in nearly every respect. There could be nothing more foolish than to allow any discussion whatever of the Charter. It was for the King to modify it of his own initiative, as he had given it, and to submit it thus modified, not for examination by the assemblies, but for acceptance by the nation.

"As regards the elections I had favoured holding fresh ones, but I did not approve of electors being made by independent prefects. Cambacérès, whose opinion is always worth having, warned me then that the Government would not survive these elections. His advice was simply to recall the 1814 Chamber, which owed the prolongation of its existence to the ministry and would thus have been entirely under its thumb.

"Instead of this advice being followed, a further decree now crowned the blunders of the ministers and made their downfall a certainty. This was the ever famous decree which authorized prefects to appoint twenty members to the colleges of the departments and ten to those of the *arrondissements*, a deplorable step the con-

sequences of which it was easy to foresee, and which brought France within an ace of disaster. When Barante mentioned this to me the first time I thought he must have gone out of his mind.

" ' What on earth are you thinking of ? ' I said. ' Don't you know how the crowd in France always flocks to the successful side. Your prefects will inevitably select their members from the Court Party, and the composition and attitude of the electoral colleges will thus be changed to such a degree that all the elections will be anti-ministerial and counter-revolutionary, and you will have a Chamber impossible to control.'

" I could never convert Barante though I vainly spent part of the night in the attempt. Still full of the memories of the Hundred Days, he feared the Bonapartists only and thought that it was impossible to do enough to keep them out of the elections.

" Next morning I had a similar failure with Pasquier.

" ' Well, at any rate, don't forget my pleas and protests,' I told them both. ' You'll ruin the ministry and possibly France; you're starting a conflict between the Chambers and the nation which may become so violent as to give the foreigners a plausible excuse for returning to the idea of partition, which they have only just dropped.'

" With this prophecy I left him, to confine myself henceforth to the rôle of spectator. Pasquier was too much enamoured of his ministerial self to notice any change, but from that day onward I gave him no more time or advice.

" Before proceeding, may we take a last glance at the colossus which has loomed so large in my pages and was now on the point of vanishing from the world's stage—a man of a very different stamp and epoch to all the figures of the first and second Restoration.

"Bonaparte gave himself up to the commander of the 'Bellerophon.'

"'Thus it comes about,' said the '*Moniteur*,' 'that under the refuge of the white ensign Bonaparte has liquidated the adventure conceived by him and carried out with the help of MM. Labédoyère, Ney, Bassano, Lavalette, Savary, Bertrand, d'Erlon, Boulay de la Meurthe, Defermon, Etienne and Mesdames Hortense-Souza and Hamelin.'

"This undignified and indecent announcement of so great an event, and the official insults to ladies,* reminded me of the gazette articles for which Napoleon was so severely criticized, and proved that more than one of them may have had Talleyrand for their author.

"I was with Talleyrand when General Becker came to report on his mission. He had received instructions to take Bonaparte to Rochefort and had left him only on the deck of the 'Bellerophon.'

"He told us a good deal about Napoleon's indecision in the last moments of his political career. It can only be explained by his extreme reluctance to abandon hope. He persisted in the hope of being recalled by the Chambers until he heard, through a letter from Joseph, of the King's entry into Paris. Until that moment he invented one pretext after another for gaining time, and was continually consulting those who had followed him about the course he should take.

"Ultimately he proposed to escape to America in a smack he had secretly bought. Then he suddenly abandoned an idea which was too venturesome to be consonant with his temperament, and surrendered to the English, whom he had fought so stubbornly and habitually

* "The hyphen between 'Hortense' and 'Souza' is an allusion to Queen Hortense's *liaison* with the son of Madame Souza." (Count Molé's note).

insulted. He addressed the following letter to the Prince Regent :

> Your Royal Highness,—As I am the cause of the divisions with which my country is torn, and the object of the enmity of the European powers, I have brought my political career to a close. I come, like Themistocles, to take my seat by the fireside of the British people ; I place myself under the protection of their laws, a protection I claim from Your Royal Highness as the greatest and the most constant and generous of my enemies.

" By the heroic tone of this letter Bonaparte concealed from himself the feebleness of this decision. It cannot be supposed that he expected it to have any result : the only effect was that he was sent to Saint Helena. Will he ever leave it ? Or, as everything seems to indicate, will he there end a life, of which the beginning was so full of the promise of greatness, the middle witnessed so many marvels and the end presented that picture of misery which is characteristic of that of adventurers ?

" May I conclude what I have to say about him with one last reflection which throws light on these three epochs of his career. The beginning was stamped with greatness because, in his rapid ascent from obscurity to the pinnacle of glory and power, he had recourse only to what was heroic and great about him, his character and intellect. The middle period was rich with marvels because with the help of his omnipotence he could give his genius free rein. The end was miserable because his heart was hard and his spirit petty, and heart and spirit alone make a man a hero in adversity."

CHAPTER XIII

Consolidation of the Department of Mines with that of Roads and Bridges.—The Ministry's mistakes.—Dismissals of peers.—Ill-timed councils of war.—Count Molé presents the Electoral Bill.—Unpopular army changes.—Count Molé intervenes to save the Pont d'Jéna.—He refuses to surrender the collection of plans to General Blücher.—Organization of the Royal Guard.—Arrest of Marshal Ney and Labédoyère.—Marshal Moncey refuses to sit in Ney's trial.—The retirement decree.—Revolt of the garrison of Strasburg.—Count Molé's views on the Treaty of Vienna.—Fouché's press decree.—Count Molé made a peer of France.—The new aristocracy.—The new peers.—Organization of the Council of State.—Troubles in the South.—The Duc d'Angoulème.—Assassination of General Ramel at Toulouse.—A threat of Spanish intervention.—The Duc d'Angoulème's strong attitude.

CHAPTER XIII

"ABOUT this time my ordinary work was much increased by the fact that the Department of Mines was united with that of Roads and Bridges. I saw no advantage in the change, but I could not conscientiously refuse to take up this new burden. The step was too reasonable in itself and the resulting economies too great for me to withhold my consent. The necessity for economy made itself cruelly felt in every quarter; I effected very large economies in the salaries of the engineers and my employees. I imposed more than one sacrifice on myself. If all the other administrative heads had acted as fairly the State would have had greater relief and, above all, public opinion would have been satisfied.

"But the ministry, instead of heeding the true voice of the public, which was appealing to it to get the nation's work done and save France, could think of nothing save the various parties which threatened its existence, and was more interested in the claims and disappointments of some than in the needs of all.

"By way of repairing last night's mistakes, this morning it issued an ordinance recalling the extraordinary commissioners it had foolishly allowed to wander about the provinces; these men had been given the powers of the princes and were everywhere kindling the fires of reaction.

"Paris, which was being suffocated by the presence of foreign armies, had still to find a contribution of one hundred millions for their maintenance. Louis, the Finance Minister, was rash enough to make the inhabitants advance this sum, which was raised on an equally arbitrary

and unjust system invented by the Prefect and the Municipal Council.

"All the ministers seemed equally inefficient and weak, though the palm, in my opinion, went to Fouché and Pasquier. They deserved it for the public-safety decrees they produced. The first, countersigned by Talleyrand, excluded from the Chamber of Peers thirty of its members on the pretext that as the attributes of a peerage created by Bonaparte were fundamentally incompatible with those of a royal creation, all who had accepted the dignity from the usurper had *ipso facto* lost the dignity they held from the legitimate sovereign. Such a method of reasoning exasperated everyone; to find a parallel we had to turn to the '*Provinciales*' or Bonaparte's '*Moniteur*.' Why, it was asked, if these thirty peers were guilty of treason or felony, was no one bold enough to take proceedings against them, instead of enthroning subtleties and despotism in the seat of reason and justice?

"To crown this disaster, there were several among them who, during the Hundred Days, had distinguished themselves only by their opposition to all violent measures and their efforts to hasten the return of the King. Simultaneously, councils of war, which obviously had no jurisdiction, were set up to try Ney and Lavalette, Labédoyère, the two Lallemans, Drouet d'Erlon, Lefèvre-Desnouettes, Ameilh, Brayer, Gilly, Mouton-Duvernet, Grouchy, Claussel, Laborde and Debelle. Bertrand, Cambronne, Rovigo and Drouot were also brought before them. But the noble character of Drouot demanded an exception in his favour, and it was demanded by honest men of all parties. Here I may refer to a piece of advice I had given Pasquier:

"'Let your retributive justice be quick as lightning; don't let the crime get cold, or public compassion will

come on the scene. Pass judgment in their absence on those who are not in your power ; what you want is not blood, but examples.'

" As a matter of fact the sentences were delayed for so long that the only effect was to arouse a compassionate interest in men who had hitherto been condemned by public opinion. Thirty-eight others were exiled and placed under surveillance by the Minister of Police until the Chambers had finally decided their fate. The composition of this second list was stamped all over with the marks of arbitrary selection and the most inexplicable caprice. We were as astonished at the names it did not contain as those it did. The public remembered the Cambrai proclamation in which the King promised to leave it to the Chambers to indicate the culprits. What would he have said if he had really known how these lists would be drawn up, and to what extent private likes and hatreds would enter into their composition? The nation, humiliated and unhappy as it was, would have blushed even more to know that the foreign sovereigns had been scrutinizing these lists for a long time, made changes innumerable and finally damned them with their approval.

" Preparations were now made for the elections which were to decide the fate of France. M. Pasquier sent utterly trivial instructions to the electoral colleges. The list of presidents, composed of names which were amazed to find themselves together, was simply a series of concessions to every party. Simultaneously the Government worked on the various draft Bills they were to present during the week. One of the most important was a Bill giving France a good electoral system. Pasquier summoned Royer-Collard, Guizot, Barante and myself to confer with him on the drafting. I was selected as reporter. I had considered this matter very carefully. A few days

were enough for me to draft and present to the committee the note and Bill which are among the annexes to these memoirs under the number I.*

"I ask my readers to glance at them. Royer and Guizot, who only half knew me then, praised my work highly; a discussion, or rather an excellent and vigorous conversation, then began.† . . . . . .

. . . . . .

Barante had nothing but intelligence.

"The subject was handled and understood, if I may say so, only by Royer, Guizot and myself. Guizot put forward a more democratic system than mine; Royer's was more aristocratic. Yet I carried the day and had the satisfaction of bringing them all round to my views. In this matter, as in all others, my object was to find not the absolute, but the relative best, in other words the best possible. No one can govern or administer on any other system.

"As I have said, Marshal Gouvion was perhaps the only minister capable of directing his department, though he showed himself not exempt from the weak- or light-mindedness which seemed to be rushing his colleagues to their doom.

"The army of the Loire had made its submission to the King. The '*Moniteur*' published an old ordinance, dated the 23rd March, from Lille, in which the King, on leaving his kingdom, had disbanded his troops; three days later a second ordinance, based on the first, created a new army and declared that since the 23rd March the old army had ceased to exist.

"This timid, subtle and belated way of preparing for an important step irritated the soldiers, and gave even

* The two documents have been lost.

† One and a half lines deleted.

those who felt guilty, courage to complain. In this measure the public saw the counterpart to the elimination of the peers. All parties thought that they were dealing with a Government which fear alone prevented from taking its revenge.

"The foreign sovereigns, who on this occasion could lay no claim either to magnanimity or tact, took it into their heads to review their troops on the very quays of the Seine, opposite the Louvre and the Tuileries. As a departmental head I had my share of the humiliation heaped upon us.

"The Prussians were anxious to blow up the splendid Pont d'Jéna, which had only just been finished, on account of its name. For a fortnight they worked vainly at their task; a French engineer would have succeeded in his object in a few hours, but the Prussian engineers placed their mines so badly and arranged the detonation so carelessly that the monument resisted. I cannot say what I felt when the noise of the explosion reached my ears. I worried the ministers to save my bridge and speak to the King; but it was in vain that I pointed out the disastrous effect this act of vandalism would have in Paris and the harm it would do to a monarch who was not strong enough to protect his subjects in a time of profound peace. It was all I could do to get myself listened to.

"Realizing that they regarded me merely as a nuisance, I wrote to the King. I do not know whether he was struck by my letter, but the fact remains that the bridge was not blown up. In cases like this all that matters is to gain time; a thing so unjust and odious is never done unless done quickly. On the fifteenth day the Prussians abandoned their idea, and I repaired the damage with the expenditure of less than twelve thousand francs.

"About this time I had to stand a regular siege by

them. As I was entering my office one day, the Secretary-General told me that a Prussian officer, armed with orders from General Blücher, had come to demand the surrender of our collection of plans. When it is remembered how much care, time and trouble I had taken to assemble this valuable collection, my reception of this announcement may be imagined. The Secretary-General had replied that I had gone out and he could hand over nothing without my permission. The Prussian withdrew, saying that he would return with two other grenadiers. I immediately had the doors closed and the most valuable objects concealed. I gave the porter orders not to open for any reason whatever, and to tell the besiegers through the window that they would have to go to the limits of violence to get the plans and that in my absence no one had any right to hand them over. I had learned that on such occasions it was vain to look for help from the ministry.

" I went to see General Müfling, the King of Prussia's Governor of Paris, told him that the plans in question were purely civil, the surrender of which could not be required by the terms of the treaty. Müfling had kept me waiting a long time and listened to me with great insolence, contemptuously looking me up and down. I kept myself under control and persisted, as I meant to succeed ; I swallowed all his insults and at length extracted the order I wanted. The siege of my house was raised and my plans remained in my possession.

" The organization of the Royal Guard now strengthened the Government's position : at any rate the Tuileries was safe against a *coup de main*. The King of France, like the other most eminent sovereigns of Europe, thus entrusted his person to the élite of his armies, who replaced privileged and gilded companions thoroughly unsuited to

the needs of the moment and the spirit of the time. The musketeers, *chevau-légers* and gendarmes were abolished, the six companies of the bodyguard cut down to four. All these changes reduced the Court to despair. There were loud cries that the Revolution was beginning again and that the fate of the monarchy was sealed.

"To these wailings the army of the Loire, which had dispersed, replied with contemptuous threats. The formation of the Royal Guard did Marshal Saint-Cyr honour. I will not venture an opinion on the formation of the legions and the new organization given to the cavalry.*

"It was about this time that Marshal Ney's arrest was effected. Certain emissaries of Decazes, the Prefect of Police, had caught him in the mountains of the Cantal. It may well be imagined that in these circumstances Fouché did not dare to reprimand M. Decazes for exceeding his powers; but the Royalists, who had long been accusing him of letting the guilty escape, did not fail to rub into him the zeal of the Prefect of Police and his recent success. For a moment Decazes had all their affection—as he has subsequently had all their hatred—as a proper product of their blindness and caprice, without having done anything to deserve it.

"It was by his efforts and energy also that Labédoyère had been arrested. My readers are familiar with the connection between my family and Labédoyère;† I was related to that unhappy man, and memories of him were mingled with all the memories of my childhood. I was overcome with distress when his sentence was decreed. The King and the ministry were inflexible, and—though

* There is one important detail it is painful to reveal—that the Marshal's plans were for a long time in the hands of the Emperor of Russia; the latter looked into the smallest details of armament and equipment. In spite of Gouvion's firmness and bitterness of heart, he had to bow to all the wishes and opinions Alexander chose to express. (Count Molé's note.)

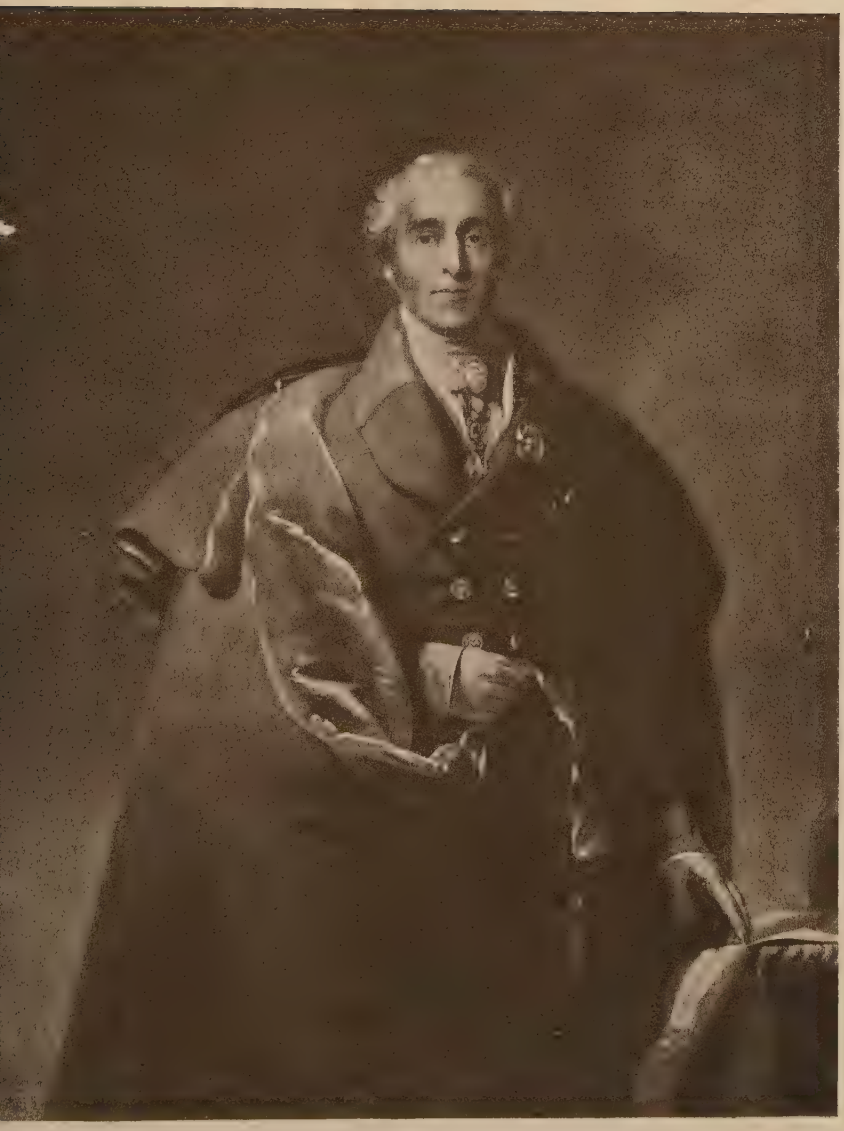
† No doubt in that part of the "Memoirs" which is missing.

I say it with horror—I thought they ought to be. He died with heroic courage and with signs of the most noble and touching repentance. His life was that of a loyal subject, a fearless soldier and true Christian. A few days earlier, his brother Henry came to see me about the steps to be taken to obtain his pardon. Advice was as futile as pleas and prayers themselves, but I stinted nothing. The details he gave me of his brother's calm resignation and recourse to religion moved me to tears.

"The approach of an inevitable death had dissipated all the illusions of the unhappy Charles; as the tomb opened, all the eternal truths appeared to him. I was very touched to find Henry de Labédoyère appealing to me, as he had lost sight of me for a long time and had bitterly criticized my opinions and actions. I thanked him in my heart for doing me this justice.

"The condemnation of Ney made a much greater sensation and was not as simple a matter. The ministry made the inconceivable mistake of calling together a council of war without ascertaining the sentiments of those who were to sit on it, and without even going into the important question of the competence of such a tribunal to try a marshal, who could not be denied the title of a peer of France at the time the crimes of which he was accused were committed.

"Marshal Moncey, when summoned to sit on the tribunal, refused, putting forward the objection of an old enmity. Instead of meeting his objections with military regulations and taking action against him as therein provided, the ministers issued an ordinance which was illegal and arbitrary, deprived Moncey of the rank of marshal and confined him to a fortress for three months. Like all weak men, they used violence and caprice every time they wanted to show strength. All the parties were



THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON.

concerned at the fate of Moncey, and a kind of discredit began to attach to the trial of the most guilty and least interesting of all the culprits.

"The famous retirement order, which appeared at this time, was the last touch which reduced the old army to fury. The way in which it was carried out, rather than the text itself, left on the active list a large number of men who had never served, and condemned the veterans of victory to poverty. At the same time four military commands were given to old courtiers.

"Indiscipline was steadily on the increase. The garrison of Strasburg mutinied; a sergeant put himself at the head of the mutineers, who incarcerated their officers in the citadel, and the city only escaped looting by advancing the men's arrears of pay.

"I was with M. de Talleyrand when this news reached him. He was putting on his boots: it did not even make him hurry. D'Hauterive and I began to say something about the necessity of promptly making an example of the principal mutineers, but we saw that the Prince was trying as hard to forget this disagreeable subject as we were to remind him of it. We left him to finish dressing in peace.

"The matter which was engrossing his attention at this time was the publication of the decisions of the Congress of Vienna in the '*Moniteur*.' M. de Talleyrand is incapable of admiring glory, but he greatly appreciates success. His vanity was wounded by the very slight sensation produced by the Treaty of Vienna, of which he boasted of being one of the principal authors.

"I was not at the congress, and have never been able to ascertain exactly what he did and what part he played in those important negotiations; but had he any reason to be so proud of the results? Has there ever been a

treaty which to such an extent lacked finality and contained the seeds of future wars and divisions ?

" Reading it carefully, does anything strike us about it except the levity and lack of forethought of all who drafted it ? A scandalous abuse of victory degrades every page and no system can be detected in the distribution of the booty.

" Europe can have lasting peace on two hypotheses only : the one is that absolute preponderance of a single power which Charlemagne, Charles V, Henry IV, Louis XIV and Bonaparte strove to realize ; the other is the balance of power resulting from a rational division of territory and population among all the states.

" The diplomats at Vienna never rose to such general considerations and thought only of extracting the greatest possible benefits for their respective powers. We may examine the treaty to see what each of them obtained as an accurate expression of its might.

" All the small states were sacrificed. England, Russia, Austria and Prussia were the strongest and had the lion's share. A kingdom of Holland, intended to be a perpetual threat of more than one kind to France, was set up under the joint patronage of Russia and England. Prussia extended her possessions to the banks of the Rhine, while Austria became absolute mistress of Italy.

" But the nature of things has its laws everywhere and they always prevent men from violating justice with impunity. The necessary consequence of the triumph of the ambitions of the great powers was that there was to be no limit to those ambitions, and the same powers were shortly to be seen destroying their own work.

" Russia and England inevitably became rivals and proceeded to struggle together for supremacy. Prussia, too strong to be a minor power and not strong enough to

be in the front rank, put herself somewhat impatiently under the influence of Russia. Austria, faithful to her policy of temporization, and ready to take advantage of all opportunities, but determined to await them, sold her neutrality to some and the hope of her support to others. She thus emerged from this terrible struggle more powerful than when she entered it, and with no sacrifices to regret save that of an archduchess.

"Even the spirit of the age seemed to have respected her, or rather the paternal government of her sovereign had preserved her nations from a taste for novelty and all desire for change. The King of Prussia, impelled by an irresistible force, promised his subjects representative government; the Netherlands received that form of government from their sovereign; a highly liberal proclamation, issued by the Pope, astonished the three legations; the democrats of England threatened the three kingdoms with parliamentary reform. But Austria, the bulwark of ancient and monarchical institutions, placed her imposing aristocracy in the way of democratized Europe.

"The English Press continued to advocate the partition of France, and Parliament seemed to outdo the nation in its intoxicated pride."

"'As Englishmen,' cried the Speaker of the House of Commons in closing the session, 'as Englishmen, we have the satisfaction of knowing that there can now be no doubt about the name and nation to which the world will henceforth give the palm for military skill and invincible courage.'"

"The self-satisfaction of such a tone betrayed men who were not very familiar with victory. What would these

proud islanders have said if they had seen their standards floating practically simultaneously from the towers of Lisbon, Madrid, Rome, Naples, Moscow, Vienna and Berlin ?

" The French, particularly those who had earned their meed of glory in so many triumphs, quaked with rage and swore that they would be avenged some day. They held the Bourbons responsible for all these humiliations, and bitterly criticized the acts of a ministry which seemed more concerned with its own preservation than their misfortunes.

" Fouché, whose selection had inspired so many hopes and fears, was always giving away the secret of his mediocrity by fresh mistakes. His report to the King on the Press, and the ordinance which was the result of it, led to a break with his party and set the liberals against him. No newspaper might appear without his authority and passing the censorship of a committee composed of men of letters. Fievée himself refused point-blank to join it. The elections, the results of which were beginning to come in, showed from what quarter the storm would come. The party of reaction and the Court was triumphing, as I had predicted.

" I had a great desire to be a deputy : it was the sole ambition of that kind which I had cherished during my whole career. The tribune seemed to me the only and the most certain way of making my feelings and real opinions known, explaining my past life and rallying to my side that portion of the public which had judged me unfairly so long. I was adopted as candidate both at Rambouillet and Pontoise.

" But at the same moment appeared a list of ninety-four new peers in which, to my unutterable surprise, I observed my own name. Although my personal position was the

motive of this favour, it had never permitted me to hope for it. Nothing has amazed me more in my life than my sudden elevation to the peerage.

"M. de Talleyrand, whose work it was, informed me of it in a manner which was all his own. I was in his drawing-room with a large number of people; it was late and I was about to retire when he raised his voice and remarked casually that the next day's '*Moniteur*' would publish the list of the new peers. On these words everyone crowded round him and rained questions on him, for each was dying to know if the list would contain his name or that of a relation or friend. Tense expectation was depicted on every face. That of M. de Talleyrand, on the other hand, seemed to me more of a mask than ever. It was as if he were genuinely sorry for people capable of becoming so excited over such a trifle.

"'Good gracious!' he said to his questioners; 'you'll see it in the paper. I can't exactly remember myself. I believe there's a M. So-and-so'; and he named myself* and three more persons present.

"Although a favour announced in such a form meant that thanks might be dispensed with, I tried to say something to him, but he turned his back on me with that air of embarrassment and confusion he always assumed when he was suspected of having desired to confer a benefit on someone.

"So there I was, a peer of France. I could not have wished for anything better, yet I regretted the Lower Chamber, which would have offered me a more public, and therefore more favourable, platform for giving a better idea of my views and feelings.

* "Several years later Madame de Dino told me that the king had offered certain objections to making me a peer, and that M. de Talleyrand was said to have overcome them with the remark: 'Sire, it is the Cardinal and my mother who ask this favour.' Talleyrand's mother had been a member of my family." (Count Molé's note).

"M. de Talleyrand was speaking quite genuinely when he said that he could not remember who the peers were. Nothing could give a better idea of the levity he showed over an act which was one of the most important of his administration. It was not merely a question of making peers whose vote would secure the ministry a majority in the Upper Chamber; it was also a matter of making this new institution acceptable to the nation, reconciling it with an aristocracy of any kind, and popularizing the only barrier a constitutional government can place in the path of democracy.

"In so enlightened a century there must be nothing fictitious about the aristocracy; it must be an absolutely genuine one, founded not only on birth but on great services rendered or immense wealth. I do not mention talent, because it should be proved by service. If the ninety-four peers had been selected from the descendants of men who grace the history of France, those whose virtues or talents had shone amidst the crimes of the Revolution, and lastly the greatest landowners—so that each department would find itself represented in the Upper Chamber—no one can say how greatly the position of the dynasty would have been strengthened, and what a service the Bourbons would have been rendered. Instead of that course being taken, and with the exception of a few historic names associated with the past and present and a few great landowners in the region of Paris, everything was given to the Court or drawn from the ranks of obscure friends of Talleyrand's.

"In these days, I repeat, there can be no aristocracy but a legitimate aristocracy, founded on right and reason, an aristocracy the model of which is offered us in the whole realm of nature. When the work of enlightenment and education has penetrated far enough into the depths

of society for every man to realize his own worth and know in what the superiority of others consists, the only aristocrats possible are those whose riches or services really place them above their fellows. An aristocracy which is thus freed from any suspicion of caprice, pretence and arbitrary selection, an aristocracy which in a word springs from the essence of things, should be hereditary for the sake of the advantages it secures ; the sons inherit the wealth, as the prestige and name of their fathers ; the gratitude of society is not extinguished by the tomb ; one generation tells the next the names of these useful and virtuous individuals, and the gaze of the public is always fixed with interest on those who bear an honoured name. It makes no difference that they may do nothing to preserve it, for men never weary of expecting something of them and hoping that their children at any rate will reproduce some of the virtues which their ancestors made illustrious.

" Such is the indestructible and most noble source of aristocracy. The ancient dynasty of the Bourbons would have recovered in a moment the brilliance and vigour of youth if it had recognized and consecrated these eternal truths.

" The opposite course was taken. In 1814 the Charter had left the old and new nobility in existence, and M. de Talleyrand was incapable of repairing that error in 1815. This idea never dawned upon any member of his ministry. Thus this promotion of ninety-four peers was simply another blow to aristocracy and the ministry ; to the ministry because a majority was to vote against it, and to aristocracy because a large number of these new aristocrats were, to say the least, absurd.

" Apparently, to represent the old judicial families, there was an obscure councillor of the *Parlement* of Paris

whose external appearance was as coarse as his mind was vulgar. The fact that he was a friend of the Abbé Louis was his only title to ask that a shameful marriage and certain scandals should be forgotten! To satisfy the provincial nobility, from the far south was summoned a ruined old roué whose existence was unknown everywhere save in the town in which he resided, a town in which all doors were closed to him. But perhaps the most scandalous selection was an old friend, or rather servant, of M. de Talleyrand, whom even he had ultimately found was too corrupt to be admitted into his confidence and affairs. I have never known anyone as to whom opinion was more unanimous* . . . . . .

. . . . . .

"And, of course, former mistresses of M. de Talleyrand had looked after their relations and friends.

"It was such a moment and such auspices which witnessed the appearance of the ordinance making the peerage hereditary. Pasquier had revised and countersigned it, and he promptly followed it up with another ordinance on the organization of the Council of State. Those who were excluded were almost all councillors created by Bonaparte. The list of councillors was as strange a medley as the whole composition of the Government. Side by side with sound and tried citizens we saw old men who were not only worn out, but strangers to the age and country which were restored to them. Bonaparte, too, employed men of all opinions, but he did so by way of fusion and not under the guise of concessions. Far from capitulating to all parties he imposed on them the duty of serving him. In their ranks he sought out all whose talent made them in any way conspicuous, and he was merciless with any thus condemned to glory or wealth

* Two lines deleted.

if they failed in any way in their duty to be loyal and devoted.

"What revealed to us the weaknesses in the selections of Pasquier and M. de Talleyrand was when we found appointments given to men who were patently and absurdly incapable of holding them; men who had been so hopelessly forgotten by the public that it seemed as if they were being exhumed; men whom ministers like Pasquier and Talleyrand—who knew their France—would never have thought of if it had not been for their desire to please the King and favour the supporters of the *ancien régime*.

"The nation, which had just had a government in the eyes of which aptitude and brains were everything and which had associated with itself, willy-nilly, everything which could increase its vigour or prestige, could not prevent itself from feeling something more than contempt for these successive lists of peers, judges or administrators. Yet in its bitter disillusionment it did not cease to be just; it blamed the monarch, whose many affections and prejudices were bound to blind him to the truth, less than the experienced ministers who had not the courage to open his eyes to it.

"I was one of the councillors and attached to the busiest and most important of the committees, the Legislative Committee. For the last six weeks the Press had done nothing but give my name in connection with some fresh nomination: first, Director of Roads and Bridges, then Director of Mines, then candidate in two *arrondissements* of Seine-et-Oise, then peer of France, and lastly Councillor of State attached to the Legislative Committee. It seemed as if the ministry wanted to involve me in all its work in despair of being able, or daring, to count me in its ranks. This at any rate was the manner in which these

successive nominations were interpreted by the public. It gave me an importance I did not possess, and I could see the moment coming when it would consider me partly responsible for the mistakes that had been made, and even those I had opposed and regretted most strongly. But it was not slow in realizing that I had nothing whatever to do with the direction of affairs, as I had lost all hope of ever being listened to.

"The state of affairs in the southern departments was even more alarming than in the rest of France. At Avignon General Brune had shot himself with a pistol to escape the fury of the populace. At Nimes and in the Cevennes the national and royal volunteers came to blows every day.

"M. de Duc d'Angoulême, deceived by all the men around him, seemed to be authorizing reaction by his presence, and sometimes his speeches. Furnished with the King's powers, he had provisionally given all posts and appointments to the most ardent Royalists. His confidential adviser was the Marquis de ——, a hot-headed, superficial and ambitious individual. The Duc d'Angoulême appointed him Administrator-General of his Government. The Marquis had the audacity to continue in his functions although the King had recalled the Prince and his powers were revoked. He even retained the prefects and magistrates he had appointed and refused to instal those sent by the ministers. It was not difficult to involve the Duke's personal pride in this conflict, and to represent what was happening as an insult by the ministry. However, the Prince's good sense and loyalty to the King's orders ultimately triumphed. The Marquis de —— was publicly summoned to Paris to account for his actions, and the new authorities were everywhere installed.

"It was at this point that one of the most atrocious

crimes which stain this period was committed. General Ramel, well known for his honourable proscription under the Directory and the interesting account of his deportation which he had published, had given the King repeated proofs of his loyalty and devotion since his first return. The only charge which the ultra-Royalists themselves could bring against him was that he continued to perform his duties during the Hundred Days. But he had rendered them such great services and shown such zeal and courage in making Toulouse return to the white standard that even their most fiery partisans spoke well of him.

"Ramel was in command at Toulouse, the garrison of which was composed partly of the temporary Marie-Thérèse Regiment and royal volunteers. These two bodies were spreading terror in the south; the ministry ordered their disbandment and Ramel was commissioned to carry out this order. From that moment he was marked out as a victim for the daggers of the secret societies, whose leaders commanded the disbanded regiments.

"A public holiday was chosen on which the inhabitants were celebrating the return of their sovereign with games and dancing. Ramel was insulted as he crossed the public square and had barely time to reach his house. Just as he was entering he was shot in the stomach. His house was immediately besieged by several infuriated individuals, and the only help he received was from the Prefect, Rémusat (who had arrived the previous evening) and some officers of the National Guard, who resorted to prayers and threats alternatively to get the assassins to go away. Ultimately the door was forced: the unfortunate Ramel hid in an attic, but he was pursued and discovered there. Sixteen stabs to the accompaniment of '*Vive le Roi, vive le duc d'Angoulême!*' left him all but lifeless.

"The Duc d'Angoulême, who had just left Toulouse,

immediately retraced his steps. M. de Villèle, then mayor of the city and qualifying for the rôle he has played since, issued a proclamation in which the inhabitants were enjoined to cease disturbances, but he spared the party at the head of which he proposed to place himself. The ministry ordered criminal proceedings to be taken and a royal proclamation, countersigned by Pasquier and couched in the strongest terms, at length began to check the progress of reaction in the south.

"It would be an injustice to the Duc d'Angoulême not to find much more to pity than to blame in his conduct. Our princes have lived in exile as at Versailles: the same prejudices have prevented them from mixing freely with their contemporaries, and looking events straight in the face. The natural timidity which is the inevitable result of their education means that they cannot form their own judgment on anything. It seems to them very difficult to think or feel anything without previous consultation.

"When the Duc d'Angoulême returned from Toulouse to Bourdeaux he learned that two Spanish armies were threatening to enter France, one advancing on Bayonne and the other on Perpignan. He left at once, went to meet General Castanos—concentrating whatever was available for defence on the way—and told the Spanish army that he would attack it if it did not retire.

"This invasion in time of peace was merely a piece of speculation on the part of the Madrid Cabinet. On the pretext of making Louis XVIII's authority more secure it meant to occupy our southern provinces as the northern had been occupied by the allied armies. In this way it hoped to acquire the same right of levying an indemnity or securing its share of the indemnity Europe was exacting as the price of what was alleged to be a protective occupation.

"Castanos, however, was not in a position to oppose the protests of his master's cousin. Perhaps all that had taken place before the Duc d'Angoulême's eyes opened them somewhat; perhaps a happy chance brought him into contact with his more sincere or enlightened advisers. Whatever the cause, from that moment he seemed to share the King's views and loyally support those of the ministry. Yet he asked and obtained some slight recognition for the Marquis de ——. The '*Moniteur*' announced that the explanations given by the Marquis, both of his conduct and his administration, had fully justified his actions.

"Governments cannot with impunity admit they have made mistakes; but when they admit it without conviction, and by way of compromise, they become an object of derision."

CHAPTER XIV

Economies realized by Count Molé in his department.—The last mistakes of Talleyrand's ministry make it impossible.—Universal anger with Fouché, owing to his report to the King on the situation of France.—Talleyrand vainly seeks a *rapprochement* with Russia, then England.—In the name of the powers Wellington demands pictures and statues from the Louvre.—Talleyrand hesitates to get rid of Fouché.—Fouché's second marriage.—The Emperor Alexander reviews his army in the Plaine des Vertus.—Talleyrand's advances to Count Molé.—Talleyrand is taken at his word, without knowing it, by Louis XVIII.—The ministry dismissed.—Count Molé's opinion of the administration of Talleyrand and his ministers.—Fouché goes to Dresden.

CHAPTER XIV

"THE Chambers had just been summoned for September 25. It was easy to anticipate that new ministers would open the session. I hastened to introduce into the corps of engineers all the reforms required by the economies which the situation made essential. It was my purpose that, if I was involved in the fall of the ministry, the engineers should not be exposed to the vexations and injustices for which economy could be made an excuse. I issued an ordinance making the number of engineers proportionate to the requirements of the department and the new boundaries of France. Age and the number of years of service were the basis of this reform. In this way any kind of favouritism was excluded, so that no protest was made. Even those who were affected by the change realized and, generally speaking, approved my intentions.

"There was now nothing to defend the ministry against its enemies; it had given all parties in turn a sense of its weakness and inefficiency. The King had accepted it against its own wish and was only awaiting a favourable moment to get rid of it. The princes detested it, as also did the priests and the nobility. The rest of the nation contented itself with despising it. Fouché left no stone unturned to persuade the world that he was still indispensable. He knew that banishment awaited him when he left office and felt that that time was near at hand.

"The 'Morning Chronicle' published an alleged letter from him to Monsieur, enclosing another letter he had sent to Bonaparte, urging him to leave Elba and retire to America. But the '*Moniteur*' contradicted the English

paper and stated that Monsieur had never received this letter.

"Fouché wanted to make another attempt to return to the party he had abandoned and recover his lost popularity. He realized—too late—that the price he paid for being Louis XVIII's minister was his duty to lead and control that party. He ventured one final effort and that futile attempt completed his downfall and involved that of his colleagues.

"He took it into his head to make a report to the King on the situation of France, a report which set out the mistakes made both in 1814 and 1815. With the most gloomy forebodings he mingled such forbidding homilies that they almost seemed threats. France was inundated with copies of this report, or rather manifesto. Its composition was inexplicable, but its publication was a crime on the part of its author. For if the fate of Louis XVI had been reserved for his successor, this document would have been an indictment of the sovereign, drawn up by one of his ministers.

"Everyone was immensely relieved. It was idle for the Duc d'Otranto to repeat that the publication of his work could only be the result of some indiscretion. This time he deceived no one, and his enemies did not lose so excellent an opportunity of dealing him his death-blow.

"For a long time the Prefect of Police, Decazes, had been secretly encompassing his ruin, and was worming his way into the King's favour. To him the arrest of Ney and Labédoyère had been due. The Royalists, whose idol he was at that time, regarded him as Fouché's successor, and the revolutionary parties did not object to him. Friends of Monsieur, such as Jules de Polignac, courted him most assiduously.

"M. de Talleyrand, with his usual lack of foresight,

paid no attention to Decazes' growing reputation. A kind of natural fatuity prevented him from having any apprehensions. All that worried him was his relations with the Emperor of Russia. (It was about the time this sovereign had made representations in favour of Eugène de Beauharnais and his sister. To please the princes M. de Talleyrand had prevented the King from granting any of his requests.)

"No sooner had Alexander left Paris to visit England than M. de Talleyrand became anxious to write to him. He called on Madame de Rémusat, with whom he was on terms of intimacy, and told her what was troubling him.

"'I feel I ought to write to the Emperor,' he added, 'but that's a bore; I should much prefer to go and play whist with Madame de Laval, who is expecting me. You must write my letter for me while I'm away.'

"Madame de Rémusat set to work. Talleyrand sent off his letter and showed her the reply, which was cold and polite, and proved that Alexander had forgotten nothing. To make his peace with Alexander, Talleyrand was tempted to take Pozzo di Borgo into the ministry, but he feared the effect in France of a Russian minister on the council, and even more the irritation it would provoke in England.

"However, in spite of the opposition of several ministers, and particularly Fouché, who feared that Pozzo would prove an equally efficient colleague—and more enterprising than himself—Talleyrand and Pasquier decided to offer Pozzo a portfolio so that he could discuss the matter with the Emperor of Russia. All this was done in the formal language of diplomacy; in other words he did and did not make Pozzo the offer, and Pozzo did and did not discuss the matter with his master. But Alexander gave

this overture so cold a reception that Pozzo thought it wiser to let the matter drop.

" M. de Talleyrand then thought that the only way of saving himself was to seek the support of England ; but England escaped him as Russia had done.

" The Duke of Wellington was commissioned by all the powers to demand from the French Government the pictures and statues which had been brought to our museum as the fruits of victory. It was a cruel blow to our national pride to have to surrender these masterpieces, which had been bought with French blood and formed a collection which drew all lovers of art to Paris. M. de Talleyrand realized this and I could see that he was even more alarmed at the idea of agreeing than of signing a peace which was disastrous in so many other ways.

" Hitherto Talleyrand had been a submissive tool in the hands of Europe and only too ready to consent to all she asked ; but he now suddenly recovered a somewhat belated independence which made no impression at this stage. His resistance was both ill-timed and immoderate, and it irritated the Duke of Wellington on whom he was also foolish enough to throw the whole blame for the powers' demand, instead of appealing to his generosity and pride to secure its abandonment.

" By a very curious combination of circumstances, the Duke was again his adversary when he desired to get rid of Fouché. When he introduced the latter into his ministry he had wounded the King and the royal family to the heart. Monsieur, who alone was frightened by the terrors of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, had thought it advisable to give the Police Department to the Duc d'Otranto ; but the result of the elections and the approach of the session gave him back his confidence and

he placed himself at the head of the party which demanded his dismissal.

" Talleyrand then passed through unutterable anguish. The deputies who were reaching Paris talked of denouncing him in the Chamber as a traitor equally with Fouché. In the party conferences, of which Monsieur was the centre, nothing less than their execution on the scaffold was proposed. All his friends kept telling him that he could save himself only by sacrificing Fouché and that he had lost the support of all parties. In his dressing-room in the morning and his drawing-room at night the only subject of conversation was the necessity of dismissing the Duc d'Otranto to save the ministry.

" Never before had M. de Talleyrand given such complete proofs of his feeble character. I could see him changing his mind every minute. It was certainly not because he boggled at abandoning a colleague or betraying Fouché, who had betrayed so many others. The fact was he was held back by that sort of diffidence that overcame him whenever he had to injure or oppose anyone face to face. He did not know how to break with Fouché and ended up by avoiding him and running away like a child. Pasquier* . . . . . tried to infuse into him some of his own courage. He had suddenly acquired a holy horror of sitting down beside a regicide.

" Jaucourt, whose honesty greatly exceeded his intelligence, defended the Minister of Police solely because he was his colleague and was being attacked. Louis also supported the Duc d'Otranto: he had always taken Fouché's machiavellian cynicism for genius and was in the habit of saying that the Restoration could be maintained only by the alliance of the Bourbons and the

* One line deleted.

murderers of Louis XVI. Lastly there was the Duke of Wellington. He had objected most violently to the King's making him a minister, but discovered that this mistake having been made there could be no greater one than to get rid of him. Madame Aimée de Coignet and several other ladies were clever enough to persuade Wellington that he had ultimately approved Fouché's admission to the council and that it was a matter of loyalty to defend him. The Duke has more pride than intellect: the surest way of making him take men or matters under his wing is to tell him that they are his creation.

"But there is something even stranger. While all this was being said and done under the eyes of Fouché, what was the famous revolutionary doing? He had abandoned himself to the charms of love!

"During his exile in Provence he had become very enamoured of a certain Demoiselle de ——. She had passed her prime and was a schemer like her mother; but she had an agreeable face and figure and was not without brains. As a good father and husband the Duc d'Otranto found his home the only refuge from the worries of business. He had long mourned the ex-nun who had been his first wife, and he now felt a need to replace her. When he became a minister of the King, Fouché thought it would also be politic to marry the daughter of a good family with whom he was very much in love. When I saw with what assurance and ease the new wife did the honours to the Duke of Wellington, the ambassadors and all the other great personages Fouché liked to gather round him, I feared more than one insult to his grey hairs.

"The *dénouement* of this drama was postponed by the great review of the troops in the Plaine des Vertus. The allied sovereigns were present. Alexander delighted in

showing France and Europe one of the finest and most formidable armies of modern times. As his habit or policy was, he mingled religious ceremonies with this warlike pomp and Madame de Krudener, who was present, wrote an inspired and somewhat extravagant account, which was published in the '*Moniteur*.'

"M. de Talleyrand sent Madame ——, who rode a fine horse and pranced among the generals and sovereigns, sparing no effort to attract their attention. She came back bursting with pride at her success and persuaded that she would restore the tottering fortunes of her old lover. A few days earlier Madame —— had come from Vienna, whither she had followed young Count ——, who had turned her head during the congress. At first Talleyrand agreed to share her with the Count; he found himself too old for his mistress, and thought it pardonable that she should not confine herself to him. But after the Congress he had brought her away, and from that moment changes in the appearance and health of Madame —— made her inward grief more patent every day. Talleyrand, fearing she would die or run away, let her return to Vienna; but no sooner had they parted than he began to look arid, changed and melancholy in his turn. It was very curious to see him—a man in his sixties—devoured by a slow fever, caused by the absence of a mistress, and dying, literally dying, of disappointment in love.

"Madame —— sacrificed her loves to her ambition. I say ambition advisedly, for that element certainly dominated all others* . . . . . .

. . . . . .

"The dream of her imagination and the ambition of her whole career was to govern some famous and really powerful man. Nature had fitted her to play such a rôle,

* Two lines deleted.

and play it not without brilliance. M. de Talleyrand went to Meaux to meet her, and with incredible effrontery brought her back in triumph* . . . . . .

. . . . . .

"Madame —— was then evincing a friendly interest in me, which was inspired more by coquetry than natural feeling. All this crowd, or rather coterie, followed Talleyrand's example and professed to be very enthusiastic about me; they pretended to tell me everything and consult me about the smallest details. They credited me with all the virtues, including those I do not possess. I was *the* man. Every day some remark or phrase of Talleyrand's put me in a more favourable light. 'I bore the stamp of ancestry; I was the only man of my age who combined much natural gaiety with quiet and dignified manners. An atmosphere of impressiveness and tranquillity surrounded me.' I could go on for ever recounting all the silly tittle-tattle of this kind I was always hearing.

"But the catastrophe was not to be averted. Pozzo, Pasquier and I made one last effort. We impressed on M. de Talleyrand that there was not a moment to lose: he must make his peace with the leaders of the new Chamber and get rid of Fouché.

"I cannot imagine ways more incompatible with the spirit of representative government than those of M. de Talleyrand. Perhaps a secret instinct warned him that his disdainful politeness, his *grand seigneur's* reserve and his popular bishop's charm would have little success with the deputies; perhaps the fear of boredom or a horror of trouble prevailed with him on this as on so many other occasions. We never succeeded in making him attract to himself any of those whom it was so important for him

* Two lines deleted.

to conciliate. As for Fouché, he promised us to settle with him in twenty-four hours, by force if necessary.

"The way in which he spoke shall be the last word in my picture of him. He left us to go to the council:

"'Gentlemen,' he said as he entered, and without even a glance at the Duc d'Otranto, 'we have still to make the finest, most honourable and important appointment in Europe, an appointment I regard as far above that of a minister of the King. In a word you have to appoint a French minister to the United States.'

"Here he began enlarging on this theme with the mentality which is all his own. Fouché listened to him coldly, then began to talk of something else, and Talleyrand returned to the subject; he was extremely proud of his ingenious idea and had no doubt that sooner or later it would produce its effect. His efforts were vain, as Fouché seemed quite determined to prefer the Ministry of Police to the American embassy.

"The Emperor Alexander was genuinely anxious that the position of the Bourbons should be secure, and he bluntly told the King that, unless he was to lose the respect of the nations, he could not retain one of his brother's murderers as a minister, especially as he had adopted so threatening a tone in a public report.

"'If M. de Talleyrand makes common cause with him,' added Alexander, 'let them both go. Your Majesty will benefit doubly.'

"M. de Talleyrand's attention was then divided between Fouché and the Chambers, the approaching session of which filled him with increasing anxiety. Anticipating

that the Royalist Party would be the strongest he thought he would impress it by appearing before it, with his colleagues, armed with fresh honours. He therefore went to see the King, asked him to make him Grand Chamberlain, and give Louis and Pasquier some decoration or title. Louis XVIII had made up his mind and gently declined. Talleyrand persisted; the King was firm. At length Talleyrand looked grave and told his sovereign that unless he was granted the favours he craved he could not appear before the Chambers or remain in his service. The King looked at him. 'It is my duty,' continued Talleyrand, 'to acquaint the King with this decision, both in my own name and in that of my colleagues.'

"'Yes,' replied the King in a tone of finality. 'I understand. That's how it's done in England.'

"At first Talleyrand did not realize the full meaning of these words. He was thunderstruck when he heard that he had been rather more than taken at his word, and that the King claimed to have received and accepted the resignation of the whole ministry.

"Then all the ministers, like Panurge's sheep, imitated their chief and took the same step. Pasquier* . . . went proudly to the King and was the first to offer what he called his resignation. The King gave them all the same answer: 'he would greatly miss their services, but their resignations had already been tendered by the President of the Council and he had accepted them.' Thus all of them at length realized the meaning of the words: 'That's how it's done in England.'

"Such was the end of this ministry which the mere shadow of the Chamber of 1815 had been enough to overthrow. No one was in a better position to judge it than myself. If anyone should read my opinion of it to-day

* One line missing.

I should be thought harsh in my judgments. Posterity will be even more so. It did as much harm as it ought to have done good. That sums up the whole position, for its task was a colossal one and even more glorious than difficult. By dint of toadying to every party it revived them all; it restored hope to those who had lost all hope; its weakness promoted opposition in every quarter, and it offered the singular spectacle of a government which preferred intrigue to authority, and declined the obedience of a nation which was on its knees, begging to be governed.

"M. de Talleyrand looked for support only to England and Russia, sometimes one sometimes the other, instead of realizing that a King of France, who owed his crown to foreign bayonets for the second time, could keep it only by shaking off the yoke of his dangerous benefactors at the earliest possible moment. He turned to one or the other and governed in its interests, according to the state of his relations with England or Russia at the moment. Another of his greatest and most incomprehensible mistakes was to have kept the Ministries of the Interior and the King's Household vacant.

"After the dismissal of M. de Blacas the King found himself without a favourite for the first time in his life. M. de Talleyrand knew that he could not live without one any more than Louis XIV could live without a mistress; but he never thought of finding him one. If Pasquier is to be believed he was on the point of filling the post.

"'It was simply for me to choose whether I should take the place of Decazes,' he said to me one day, 'if the life of a favourite were conceivable to a man of my temperament.'

"The fact is that both his tastes and his temperament made him suitable, but he could never win either the King's liking or his confidence.

"M. de Talleyrand carried his contempt and indifference to the point of offering the King —— or ——* as minister of his household in succession to M. de Blacas—in other words, an old fool and a young man, both of them equally disliked by Louis XVIII.

"It was thus that he successively estranged Russia, England, the nation and the King. His dismissal was a genuine puzzle and he was anxious to represent it as the effect of his resistance to the encroachments of the foreigners. In giving a personal description of him I said that no man was ever more easily duped. On this occasion he was the dupe of one of the most contemptible creatures of all times, ——,† to whom he told all he did, including his sins, and who repeated everything to Monsieur. All of us told him who this double traitor was, but we never succeeded in getting him dismissed. He had ties with —— which he could not break, and felt at ease with him, an ease he never knows except with men he can despise.

"No doubt the bulk of the mistakes made by their ministry are Talleyrand's, as he was its head; but it must be admitted that the judgment of his colleagues was affected with the same sort of light-headedness as his own.

"Fouché lost his reputation for brains and far-sightedness; his proscription lists, apart from the caprice, unfairness and levity revealed by the selection of the deportees, had the irreparable drawback of violating the pardon granted by the King on his return to France, and destroying the confidence of the nation in its Government.

"When one knows Pasquier, it is not surprising that he thought he could deprive peers of their titles without violating the Charter, and that, without suspecting the fact, he paved the way for the electoral triumph of the

* Two names deleted.

† A name deleted.

party he feared, thanks to his decrees, electoral legislation and similar measures.

"What is more difficult to explain is that the common sense and strength of mind of Gouvion ever allowed him to disband the French army without creating another, to take Swiss regiments back into French service on terms which were bound to make them increasingly unpopular, to enrage all the officers by his half-pay system, and to bring Ney before a council of war which obviously had no jurisdiction, and punish arbitrarily an old warrior like Marshal Moncy merely because a feeling of delicacy prevented him from agreeing to be one of Ney's judges.

"But I have not yet said anything of the greatest evil which my country owes to this ministry.

"It wounded the proud hearts of the French by declaring them guilty of the usurpation of the 20th March, or at any rate an accomplice. This stigma on the men of the Hundred Days who thought it their duty to serve and defend their country whatever government it might have, was the climax. It was a repetition of the mistake of 1814 when the Bourbons seemed to be amnestying a whole nation which was still intoxicated with the glory it had won without them. The French do not like being pardoned.

"On the King's second return the Government should have devoted all its skill to circumscribing the crime and keeping the number of the criminals as low as possible. In a word it should have been merciless with its actual authors, and opened its arms to all the others, treating them as prodigal sons, instead of alienating the sympathies of all who had borne arms, performed any official duties or taken an oath during the Hundred Days—which meant practically all the brains and activity in France. Instead of putting the whole of France in quarantine and making

everyone undergo that process of disinfection which is still being demanded, the Government should have seen that the return of the royal father was celebrated by universal relief and rejoicing. *That* was the way to gain everything —even the repentance to which the pride of those who insist upon it attaches so much importance.

"But forgiveness does not go with weakness. If Frenchmen alone had fought Frenchmen at Waterloo, and the white cockade had beaten the tricolour, then and then alone would it have been possible to be generous.

"The Duc d'Otranto, foiled at all points and under pressure from every side, had found himself constrained to send in his resignation to the King shortly before the dismissal of his colleagues. He had accompanied it with a letter which he read to me, in which he spoke of his vote at the trial of Louis XVI, his remorse and his position in Louis XVIII's council, in noble and touching words. The King did not reply for several days, because he was uncertain as to what should be done with Fouché. At length he wrote to say that he accepted his resignation, but counted on his loyalty, and added that as he still valued his services he had appointed him his minister at Dresden.

"Fouché lost no time in getting away. Before leaving he had the consolation of seeing M. de Talleyrand share his fate. Thank Heaven, I have hardly ever failed to show my sympathy for a public man when the day of his downfall was drawing near. I do so both from instinct and inclination. Apart from anything else I should be tempted to do so by my taste for observing men. The human spirit must be seen when it is in the throes of humiliation as well as when at grips with adversity.

"With good health and very little courage a man can face poverty and disappointed ambition. But to suffer

in one's pride and self-opinion, to lose the consideration or respect which have been made the goal of all one's activities, to see one's self forgotten by a world which resounded with one's name—that is the touchstone, the real test, failing which judgment must be suspended.

"I am bound to say that in my eyes Fouché emerged from this business with distinction. He seemed to me to cherish no rancour or bitterness against his colleagues. Yet he was already feeling the weary melancholy of exile, though he faced his future not only calmly but with open-minded candour, like a man accustomed to high affairs and familiar with the most tragic vicissitudes. I saw him still devoting all his powers to speculating on our future. His prognostications were no doubt gloomy. Pray Heaven he may be proved mistaken!"

End of Volume I.

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